

IN LONDON

AND OTHER POEMS

C. F. SHEARER

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IN LONDON, AND OTHER POEMS.



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AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

C. J. SHEARER.



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APOLOGIA POETÆ.

TO-DAY the Poet's quest is vain.

He sees no more the mellow fields
Vainglorious in pride of yellow grain,
Where every step its harvest yields.

For now the gold is gathered all ;
The barns are bursting with their store ;
High-heap'd upon the great world's threshing-floor
Lie prone Earth's bearded warriors tall.

Belated gleaners in the fields of Time,
We walk where Shakespeare's scythe hath been,
Or Milton's sickle, fain to glean
Some unconsider'd ear of rhyme.

Yet must we sing. The hidden thrush
That, in his leafy ambush, hears
A larger rapture in his startl'd ears,
Pipes not the less within his bush.

And so must we. For, as we go,
Shaping our thought with loving toil,
Some fragments of the living seed we sow
May fall upon a fruitful soil.

Voices within life's busy wilderness,
We cry beneath some heedless star,
Seeking, with patient eagerness,
To push the gates of thought ajar ;

Content to know that, in Time's hidden plan,
When past are careless praise or blame,
These gusts of spirit-breath may fan
Some dying ember into flame.

* * * *

How strangely things do come about
To mock the wisdom of our plan.
We sleep to dream, and dreaming wake to doubt,
And all remains as it began.

In vain we seek with anxious thought
To catch the truth the soul divined.
Still must our dearest strivings end in naught.
The best must still remain behind.

Tho' visions circle round our head,
And passionate longings stir the tongue,
Our deepest thoughts must still be left unsaid,
Our noblest songs be still unsung.

What matters all our garner'd lore ?
Our dearest joys by pain are bought ;
For ever fall across the path before
Death's shadow and the hope that cometh not.

What though we dwell in lowly cot,
Or mock at Christ from lordly hall ?
So swiftly ends our mortal lot —
A little dust thrown on us ends it all.

Death conquers us who, dying, conquer Death.
The mightiest of our victories
Is won when, with its latest breath,
The warrior-soul speaks God's great name, and
dies.

What boots a nobly-broken heart,
Or flutter of a rudely-shattered wing ?
Fate, standing from our lives apart,
Darkens our cage to make us sing.

Groping our way thro' life we go ;
We cannot see the path for tears.
Yet out of gloom the truth at length we know—
A mellower wisdom comes with years.

Our lives lie on the anvil—day by day
Time's hammer shapes us to a fitting end ;
Fate's fingers subtly bend
To nobler forms our stubborn clay.

O hearts that droop ! this truth I bid you know :
Our hands in far-off climes shall reap
What here, with toil and pain, we sow.
Be of good cheer ! God hears us while we sleep.

Elsewhere our mortal tree outflowers,
And drops its fruit in other lands.
Beyond these transient hours
Our little lives shall run in golden sands.

IN LONDON.

I.

'Tis the place—here England's heart
Beats beneath her smoky gown ;
Seated on her isle apart,
Weary of the triple crown.

Here the river, vast and still,
Mystery of black unrest,
Bearing from the breezy hill
Daisy-faces on its breast :

Telling of the baby-brooks
Prattling thro' the flowery ways,
Conning in their ancient books
Lessons of primeval praise.

Here the old sea-lion's den,
Couch'd among her thousand ships ;
Here the myriad throng of men,
Prayer or passion on their lips.

Here the Roman eagles screamed,
Prophets of a larger day ;
Here the mighty Cæsar dreamed
Purple dreams of boundless sway.

Here the vulture-Norseman came,
Patient of his fierce sea-brood,
Wrapping all the land in flame,
Quenching fires in human blood.

Here the blue-eyed Saxon saw,
Sitting 'neath his seven-fold tree,
Slowly flow'r the primal law
And blossom into Liberty.

Till, with anger all aglow,
The Norman came with mailèd face,
And, standing o'er his vanquish'd foe,
He made a footstool of his race.

At length, from wreck of old and new
 Upon Time's anvil darkly laid,
A stronger people slowly grew
 Out of the dust of nations made.

* * * *

Sullen Siren of the South,
 Growing ever grim and old,
Thronèd at the river's mouth,
 Purple-cloth'd and gorged with gold :

Semele of our later days,
 Sitting in thy golden shower,
How thy children tell thy praise ;
 How thy God hath brought thee power !

Girt and vestur'd like a queen,
 With an aspect dull and gray ;
Haughty in imperial sheen,
 Coldly glad and sadly gay :

Wrapping round thee, like a vest,
 All the glory of the past ;
Drawing to thee what is best
 With a purpose dim and vast.

All thy house is filled with gain,
Heap'd thy ships with precious store ;
In thy barns the surging grain
Seeks to rend the straining door.

Oh, thy lips are stained with wine,
Groans thy table 'neath its load,
Thou art swath'd in linen fine,
Clothed and housèd like a god.

In thy halls the sound of mirth
Breaks upon the drowsy street,
When the joyous grapes of earth
Are crush'd beneath thy careless feet.

* * * *

Hoary towers that, 'mid the flow,
Watch and wait with folded hands,
Sphinxes of the long ago,
In the waste of human sands ;

Weary preachers, old and gray,
Standing mutely face to face,
Sternly calling, all the day,
In the busy market-place.

Teach your lesson, aged stones,
Strangers to these later days,
Guardians of our sacred bones,
And censors of our newer ways.

Tell how England's realm was great
In the grander days of old—
Mighty by the hand of Fate,
Not alone by power of gold.

Tell how when, in this English land
The woman sat astride the throne,
The Spaniard came with fierce sea-hand,
Across the sail-less ocean blown :

And how, with faithful hearts and true,
Grasping her sea-steed's stormy mane,
She met him with her iron few
And broke the brooding power of Spain.

And how, when in that earlier prime
The land was strong with keep and tower,
By gateway of a sudden crime
She wrestled with her kings for power ;

How, in the days when Roundheads kept
Grim watch by holt and heath, when he—
The Rebel king—was lord, she leapt
To snatch the sceptre of the sea ;

And o'er the shuddering deep she went
In hurricanes of smoke and flame ;
And far across the earth was sent
The thundered menace of her name.

And how, in days of craven kings,
When patriot-heads were bending low,
She saw her Genius spread her wings
To seek a refuge with her foe.

Till she, whose fame was not her own,
But great by those who stood beside,
Sat placid by her vacant throne,
And, looking o'er the guardian-tide,

Saw dimly, on the further shore,
War's lightnings play about the lance
Of him who drove in might before
The drooping crests of France.

Tell how the seed she cast away,
 With patient labour meekly sown,
Grew slowly upward, day by day,
 Until at last she knew her own.

How, with the slowly-creeping years,
 The child that grew beside her knee,
Now sharer of her hopes and fears,
 Reach'd hands across the sea ;

Till, in the day of haughty power,
 She scorn'd her wisest and her best,
And in a dark and fateful hour,
 She thrust her children from her breast :

Till, from the past grown greatly wise,
 Forgotten all her older pain,
She saw exulting peoples rise
 And crown her once again.

A newer Rome, a later Greece,
 Their narrow vestures all outgrown,
Whose feet shall tread the ways of peace
 And all her deeds to Truth be known.

II.

Gray land, whose head is bent with years,
Whose weary race is never run,
On whom the future's hopes and fears
Do longing hang—O island sun !

To whom, deep sunk in Southern wastes,
The ocean sun-flow'rs lift their eyes
Where many a dusky monarch hastes
To kiss thy sceptre ere he dies :

Stern warder of the western gate,
Still holding fast the ancient keys,
England ! Queen inviolate !
And mistress of the seven seas :

This island-meadow, daisy-pied,
Where Freedom's flag was first unfurl'd,
Whose ruler, looking o'er the tide,
Now stands the lord of half the world !

Who led a strenuous youth of pain,
And grew through greatness into ease ;
Here cradl'd in the mist and rain,
And set within these northern seas ;

To whom, across the utmost wave,
No people's wrongs in vain have cried,
Who gave her freedom to the slave,
And hope to many a heart beside :

Arouse thee from thy silken bed,
And see, beside thy pillow, stand
The pale shade of thine Ethelred
To mock thee with uplifted hand.

Look o'er yon pale sea-ribbon, set
To keep thee in thy rocky home,
Where two encircling seas are met
To guard thee with their sheltering foam ;

Look where the nations stand apart,
And murmur with uneasy sound,
Grasping their arms with sudden start
At every footfall on the ground ;

That Europe, walking in her field,
Starts in amaze when, at her feet,
Seeking what harvest it may yield,
She sees arm'd men grow up for wheat.

Or where, within thy peaceful keep,
By birthright of an ancient hate,
One, breaking rudely on thy sleep,
Knocks long and loudly at thy gate.

Who, once thy footstool, now hath come
To drink the wine of Liberty,
And standing here, no longer dumb,
Dares to importune to be free.

Statesmen, hearken ! this is she
Who stood with Titan form unbent,
Colossus of the narrow sea,
And pillar of a continent.

Who, when the despot's iron feet
Were planted on her form below,
Held fainting Europe up to meet
The desperate onset of the foe.

Yon sun that, girt in fiery wrath,
In God-appointed circle comes,
Still broadens down his flaming path,
Led by the beat of British drums.

And as he goes, a conscious King,
Thro' gates of day wide-open flung,
He hears the British bugles sing,
And music of the English tongue.

No land hath been so bleak and bare,
No spot so utterly unknown,
But she hath lit her camp-fire there,
And set her feet thereon.

Till now, across the world's wide face,
A path of empire slowly drawn,
She sees the footprints of her race
Go dimly towards the dawn.

What though she crouch in tempest-tears,
Storm-scourged and drench'd with rain and snow,
While hail-fiends cast their hurtling spears
In slanting myriads as they go?

What though the sowers of the air,
The windy gateways passing through,
As o'er the sleeping land they fare,
With salt the stricken fields bestrew?

She sits, in stormy pride apart,
Contemplating the world afar,
And hearing with unmovèd heart
The mutter'd sounds of distant war.

How far the tide of empire flows
Since that red flag was first unfurl'd ;
And still, in conscious pride she goes,
The standard-bearer of the world.

* * * *

O rulers of this patriot-realm,
And guardians of your centuried trust,
See that no dangers overwhelm
And trail her banner in the dust !

Bethink you of the circling haze,
The darkness of the moon's eclipse,
The armèd foes that stand at gaze,
The sudden rush of midnight ships.

Sleep not, while stealthy foemen watch,
Sleepless, beside the open door,
Lest silent fingers lift the latch,
And thou be free no more.

Now kingdoms rise and states uprear,
And empires totter to their fall,
And ever, thro' the circling year,
Confusion hovers over all.

But though the thrones of kings go down
In midst of peril and alarm,
Till ancient landmarks sink and drown—
Statesmen, keep this realm from harm !

1892.

ODE TO TWO CENTURIES.

I.

I.

CENTURY, standing on the shore of Time,
Whose sands are running low ; upon whose head
The snows of ninety winters have been shed ;
Whose weary feet will soon forget to climb
The hill of ages ; soon to make thy bed
Amid the white sands of Eternity ;
Lo ! with thine orbéd eyes I look, and see
Shapes of dim years long overpast and fled,
Rise up, like ghosts, and in the far-off morn
Walk in the hollow chambers of the past :
The sad survivors of a day outworn,
Entomb'd within a silence dim and vast.

2.

Child of the ages, cradl'd in war's arms,
How blew the blasts of battle round thy head :

How ran thy life in storms !
Thy baby-feet were dyed a crimson-red,
Thy baby-hands grasp'd only war's stern toys ;
Thy headlong youth amid the din and noise
Of camp and bivouac sped ;
War's banners drap'd thy bed,
Thy only books her records, stern and dread.
And trumpets blar'd, and battle-drums were rolled,
And standards flapp'd their gladness, fold on fold ;
And on the deep the great ships heel'd
When reeking cannon roar'd their grimy glee,
And nations died upon the field ;
And thro' the land, from sea to sea,
The people bled, while Europe reel'd,
Weak from the loss of blood ; till he,
Time's greatest captain, glory and shame of France,
Fell from his height, and once again
She laid aside her gory lance,
And hush'd to sleep her pain.
And once again the nations gather'd up
Their broken dreams, and counted up their dead.
Again the wine foam'd mantling in the cup ;
And in the cottage there was bread ;
And fathers sought again their easy chair,
And maidens sat no more alone.
No more the drum peal'd thro' the village street,

And bugles sternly blown,
But everywhere was sound of joyous feet,
And gladness everywhere.

And lapp'd in peace the nations lay ;
The years pass'd calmly on their way,
And nevermore the jar of coming strife
Fretted the people's life.
And babes were born, and grew to man's estate
And held their children in their arms ;
And ran the round of joy and hate,
And liv'd their lives, and passed away,
Nor ever heard war's loud alarms.
Ships rotted idly in the bay,
And old men, sitting at their ease,
Told to the wondering children at their knees
Strange tales of wars in far-off days,
As things long past and gone ;
And guns stood rusting in their place,
And bugles hung unblown,
And in the earth the dragon's teeth slept on.

And over all was universal calm,
A silent, ceaseless, human psalm ;
Until at last, gall'd by the heavy yoke,
The toiler from his prison-sleep awoke,

And, turning as he lay,
Shook the tyrant's hand away ;
For in his blood a ferment new
Struggl'd fiercely with the old,
And ever stronger grew,
And ever wax'd more bold ;
And, blindly groping at the gate,
He rocked the pillars of the State,
Wrenching in wrath the mighty stones,
Till crouching kings clung trembling to their thrones.

Again upon Time's patient loom
Was slowly wrought the web of doom ;
And as the shuttles flew,
Once more the threads ran in the old design,
With cunning thought and fine :
Once more the purpose grew.
Again one stood in Europe's fairest field,
And strove again to wield
The sword of him who went before—
The new Patroclus, he who bore
The armour and the name alone
Of him who held a bloody creed,
Who sat Europa like a steed,
And made her neck his throne:
A later Cadmus, all untimely born,

Sower of the dragon's teeth,
And reaper of the human corn ;
Sprung from that undying seed
Lying in the soil beneath,
Around whose feet the serried legions grew,
Like Earth's immortals, slowly born
In the shining fields at morn,
Silver-helm'd 'neath flashing dew ;
Then at last the cataract-cloud
Broke with clamour long and loud,
Until the wildly-beating rain
Laid the lines of ripen'd grain ;
And, when all had passed away,
Fallen there he lay,
And Europe breathed again.

3.

And growing with thee, hand in hand, I see
The youngest of the nations set his feet
Upon the stair of empire ; soon to be
Above the heads of kings ; a rider fleet,
Set firmly in his everlasting seat ;
A bondsman, greatly daring to be free,
From whose world-plunge into the unknown sea
The waters ran in ever-widening rings,
Until on Europe's startl'd shores they beat,

And shook the thrones of kings.
Who, mounting backwards to the source of things,
Sought to redress the wrongs of Time,
And lead exulting back the world's prime ;
And, broad'ning into larger aims,
Thrust back the old renowns ;
Cast down the ancient crowns,
And spurned the lower fames.

And, leaning from the watch-tower of the Past,
A mighty shape athwart the mists of Time,
I see the father of our newer prime—
The great lone soul, whose steadfast faith at last
(In purpose sure, in constancy sublime)
Sail'd 'neath the beck'ning stars, adown the vast
Sea-slope, beyond the hopes and fears of men ;
Who his great sea-heart far before him cast,
And followed it, till praise and blame were vain,
And drew a world from out the awful waste.

And as he went he saw the tirèd sun
Sink, hissing-red, into the sicken'd deep ;
And in her bed-gown white the idiot moon
Rise from her fever'd couch to walk in sleep.
Before the dawn he watched the strange stars flee,
That came, wild-eyed, to gaze when day was done.

Beneath his feet he felt the great waves swoon
That sank, in dumb amaze, into the sea.
But though in anguish o'er the ocean blown,
Yet where these were there still was night and day,
And where they were he could not feel alone,
For God was near, tho' man was far away.

And they who follow'd far athwart the blue,
Seeking his footprints on the restless wave ;
Who crossed the world to find a quiet grave,
Scorners of every heedless wind that flew ;
Pilgrims of Peace who sped on fateful wings,
Spurning a heedless world, a faithful few,
Accusers of the bloody hands of kings,
Who from the Temple stole the sacred fire
Wherewith to light the shatter'd lamps anew,
That leapt to lick Oppression's funeral pyre.

II.

I.

And thou, dim shape, that standest at our door,
A runner swift from God to run thy race,
Of whom no human eye hath seen the face ;
Whose shadow falleth on the path before,
Who waitest, silent, in thy appointed place
To take the torch thy bright forerunners bore.

O ! with uplifted hearts we turn to thee,
Dim sower in the airy fields of Time.
Our eyes may never see thy mellow prime,
Parent of days unborn, and fruitful years,
And mighty enterprises yet to be ;
Upon whose neck we hang our hopes and fears,
As thro' a mist of tears
We seek an age sublime.
Lo ! by the open gate I see thee stand,
The Banquo-mirror in thy hand,
In whose bright depths God doth unmov'd behold
In never-ending line unrolled
Thy shadowy children, every one
Wait on the threshold of the sun :
Swift arrows that the silent hand of Fate
Shoots thro' the gleaming gate.

2.

Mother of mighty days and deeds unborn,
Within whose womb lie hid the slumbrous years
Whose measured lapse shall leave thee all forlorn,
Stirred by the tender tumult of Time's tears,
Whose lingering lips shall blow thy wreathèd horn,
What wonders shall thy hidden heart unfold,
What mysteries be unrolled,
Ere from God's hand shall drop thy hundred days,

And thro' Time's streets shall pass, with silent tread,
New-risen from the dead,
Singing their solemn hymn of praise,
Time's gladiators from the fields of death,
Crying with stricken breath :
'Ave, Te morituri salutant ;
'Ave,' and ever 'Salutamur Te,'
The burden of Life's never-ending chant,
Sung by the lips of Time
While yet the agèd moon was in her prime !
And thou shalt hear
The tramp of dim and distant days
Sounding in thy vacant ear,
Marching thro' the hollow ways ;
And shalt catch with dumb amaze
The stealthy footsteps of each coming year.
And thou shalt sit close to the throne of God,
Washing His white feet with thy children's tears,
Seeing thy babes slip from thee one by one ;
Watching the fiery sun
Swinging the planets round his glowing head,
And comets, angry red ;
And mark night's silver-sickl'd lord
Turn to the deep his buckler broad,
And draw the waters with a smile.
And thou shalt seek to reconcile

The meaning of the hurrying years ;
And thou shalt go, veiling thy wrinkled face,
Weak with the stress of Time, and on thy head
The ashes of a furnace cold and dead ;
Whisp'ring beneath thy breath, in some lone place,
' Bid me to know no more ; mine eyes
Have seen the heritage of God,
And I have grown untimely wise
Drinking His wisdom, full and broad.'
For thou shalt pass the mystic door,
Leaving all things as before—
The patient riddle still unread,
The mystic sentence all unsaid.
Yet shalt thou read upon thy dusty way
Dim lessons in the book of Time,
And wondrous portents that for aye
Shall make thy path sublime ;
And see, as wanes thy futile hour
And slowly sinks thy primal power,
Sights that will strengthen thee to go
Across the misty void below—
Dim visions of a larger day
Slowly broad'ning to its end ;
Glimpses of a spacious plan
To a mighty purpose bend ;
And catch across the mellow years,

Thro' thy dimly-veiling tears,
Assurance of a meaning vast
In whose pool thy hand shall cast
Pebbles for the feet of man ;
And thou shalt gather in thy hand
The threads of many a warring strife,
And weave each silent, fateful strand
Into the larger rope of life.
And clear and luminous suns shall pass
Across the threshold of thy ken ;
And thou shalt see, as in a glass,
A vision of the deeds of men
Deep graven in Time's lasting brass—
Shalt see drop from God's fiery pen
The record of the time that was ;
And through the fret of jarring laws
Shalt hear Creation's deep ' Amen ' ;
And know, as fades the waning hour,
And all thy future turns to gray,
That still thy sorrows shall outflow'r,
And blossom in a perfect day ;
As, stepping from thy sinking bark,
And casting off Life's fretted rope,
Man's foot shall seek another ark,
And shelter 'neath a newer hope ;
And, pushing from the barren sands,

His sail spread to a fresher breeze,
Shall dare the undiscovered seas
To seek the shores of other lands ;
And, ranging 'neath a lower star,
Shall swiftly cross Time's silent bar ;
And there, beyond his utmost quest,
Shall find the haven of his rest.

3.

Angel of God ! dim kinsman yet to be,
Stem thou the mighty flood of human tears,
And roll the darkness from the promis'd land.
Drop from the prison of thy dusky hand
Gleams of thy garner'd message ; let us see
The secret meaning of thy appointed plan,
And settled purpose of the patient years
That stretch between us and Eternity—
An awful staircase for the feet of man,
Whose slow ascent, by toiling nations trod,
Leads slowly up to God.

FRANKLIN'S DEATH-MARCH.

LONG did they drift about the frozen North,
High on the world's roof ; and day by day,
Lock'd in the ice-fiend's cruel arms they hung,
Held by an awful spell. A fearful load
Sat on their souls ! The doom'd ships idly lay,
Like to accursèd things ; their bulwarks grew
White with hoar rime, and all the rigging stood
Stiffen'd to iron bands ; the shrinking planks
Groan'd with the ghastly horror of the place.

A world of ice ! Around them, league on league,
Huddl'd the gleaming floes ; on fields of snow
They saw the sunlight lie in frozen swathes.
Silent upon the whiten'd deck they stood
Watching the dreary scene ; across their cheeks
They felt the north wind lay his icy whip.
Their labour'd breath rose on the fretful air,

And passed in smoke ; within the hollow night
They heard the sudden icequake rend the pack
With thunder-roar.

Slowly the waning day
Shrank to a fitful gleam ; the pallid sun,
Nipt by the fingers of the cruel cold,
Droop'd in the bitter air, and ever down
Lower it sank upon its heavy way.
It touch'd the Arctic rim ; then, all at once,
It sank, and all was gloom. Day after day
Prison'd they sat within the narrow ships,
Counting the weary hours ; at night they watch'd
Strange shiv'ring stars creep o'er the black abyss.
Far on the dim horizon's utmost bounds,
In noiseless pulsings of his fiery heart,
The sudden Borealis leapt and thrill'd.
Anon they saw the fire-ship of the night,
With flaming length immeasurably far,
Trail his long leagues of light across the sky.
At times above their heads the hollow moon,
Sailing above them like a white-wing'd bird,
Hung in their dreams ; and so, with leaden foot,
The dreary hours limp'd painfully away.

At last they saw their gloomy prison-walls
Change to dull lead, and slowly, day by day,
Brighten to silver at the feeble dawn.
The long, sad night was o'er, and pallid day,
Casting aside her grave-clothes, rose once more
Out of the wintry tomb, and once again,
Gleaming with gauzy gladness, took her way
Adown the bright'ning East, and from her wings
Shook waves of living glory as she went,
Until at last, in soul-entrancing awe,
They saw the dawn flow'r like a crimson rose.

And so they waited with the wolfish hours
That waited ever by them, wrestling through
The year's long night and day. In vain they hop'd :
They could not help, but ever drifted on
To unknown seas that drew them evermore.
They knew not where they went, but night and day
The world seem'd drifting with them, and they saw
Each dreary dawn the same unchanging plain
Stretch coldly round them : all their futile life
Seem'd but the dull repeating of a task
That had no end or aim—a weary strife
That ever led to naught.

Then some one said :

‘ Why linger here ? God holds us from our end.
Here is no comfort more : we are accurs’d ;
Our lives are but as footprints on the snow
That none may follow ; if we stay we die.
Our wives are weary list’ning for our steps,
Our children waken for us ; in the night
We hear them crying ; we would see their face.
We cannot bear it ; we will seek or die.’
And, going from the doomed ships, straightway out
They set their eager feet upon the ice,
And in their hands they took their patient fate.

So from the dawning to the setting sun
They went, still pressing onward to the South,
Seeking for life and hope. Before them lay
A mighty wilderness of snow and ice,
League upon league, beyond the realms of thought ;
Behind was horror and the doom of death
Dogging their weary footsteps. As they went
Vast flocks of sea-birds pass’d them, hurrying on
To gain a warmer shore ; their rushing flight
Mock’d the dull torpor of their heavy way.
‘ Onward ’ was still their cry ; at dawn and eve,
Athwart the frozen floor, they took their way.
Day after day they clomb the weary floe,

Or track'd the winding shore ; o'er endless wastes
Of gleaming ice they drew the cumbrous sledge
To meet the long'd-for night. They could not stop,
To stay was death, for Death press'd close behind.
Cold gripp'd their senses, hunger gnaw'd their frames,
Their blood grew weak and thin, their heavy hearts
Throbb'd with a hollow din against their ribs,
And as they went still ever at their head
Death strode before to point the destined way,
And still they follow'd him, a silent band
Of ghostly shapes that walk'd as tho' asleep.
None spoke, or if by chance one op'd his lips
The sound seemed far away, as if it came
Across a league of snow, for, day by day,
Their voice grew weaker, and their hollow eyes
Question'd their comrades with a hungry stare.
An awful presence, like God's spoken curse,
Hung round about them. Where they slept they died,
And where they died they found a resting-place.
No grave they dug, nor any could be made,
But pil'd their scanty stones, and still they strove
To grasp Hope's dying hand, for still they thought
Of wife, and child, and home that lay beyond.
And so they struggl'd onward, as if doom'd,
Thro' endless vistas of unfolding years,
To walk these icy wastes. And still they went.

At last they came into a frozen land
Where all things seem'd attuned to their state.
Out of the bosom of the solid deep
An island rose whereon, as on a throne,
Sat Winter, couch'd on ice perpetually.
All round were hoary rocks whose pitiful arms
Thrust back the wintry winds, and stood around
To guard them from the keen and bitter cold.
And here they stay'd their feet—they could no more.
Long had they toil'd, with desperate steps and slow,
Wrestling with Death, and striving evermore
To tire their constant foe ; but now they knew
Their toil was over—Death had led them home.
The end was come, and with a weary sigh
They laid aside their toil, and sat them down
To wait his time. And here, while crumbling brain
Whisper'd of wife and child and blazing fire,
Of neighbours sitting in the chimney-seat,
While laugh and jest and careless talk went round,
They slowly sank and pass'd away in dreams,
Breathing their souls in silence out to God.

O baffled searchers of the frozen North,
Whose feet have run beyond the steps of men,
How far remov'd from human ken you sleep,
Deep in the furthest fastness of the earth !

Fallen amid the illimitable snows,
Conquer'd you lie on that white battle-field—
You with the din of combat in your ears,
And music pealing on your dying sense :
Cold sentinels on the ramparts of the world
You keep your silent watch. Around you gleam
The everlasting snows, and o'er your tomb
The weird winds wail with pitiful memories.
No flow'rs grow on your grave, nor wife nor child
May stand beside your icy dormitories,
But not the less to you a nation's heart
Turns with the longing of a widow'd pang
Whose bones, in scatter'd remnants, coldly lie
Far on the frozen spaces of the North.

NAPOLEON AT SAINT HELENA.

A FRAGMENT.

THUS, then, doth end the record of my days !
The cup and measure of my life is full,
And all is now a mockery and a lie !
Now must I sit and feed on my own heart,
Like a cag'd eagle ; I am cast away,
Unhing'd, disjointed, sever'd from myself,
And broken ere my time ! I am become
A nameless thing—a king without a crown ;
The pitiful semblance of a castaway,
With'ring, in parch'd retirement, day by day,
Who sits and gazes with his thirsty orbs,
As he would drink the ocean with his eyes.
And I, that found the spacious earth too small,
Am cabin'd in this niggard plot of ground,
Baffled and beaten, hurled from out my place,
My course of empire ended in a bog.

Here must I wait, in loneliness of soul,
Fretting my sightless chain, of hope bereft,
Till Time's shrill cock shall crow the dawn of doom.

How am I fallen ! In the days that were,
Kings held my stirrup, and earth was my steed,
And I bestrode it like high Lucifer ;
But it hath reared, and I am overthrown,
Like Satan fallen, never more to rise ;
For I encounter'd One upon the way
Who barred my onward path with unseen arm,
For God was envious and held me back.
I have writ my name red in the world's blood,
And every drop takes on a separate voice
To hiss damnation in my aching ear.
'Look on thy work,' they cry, 'this hast thou done :
We are thy children, gaze upon our face ;
Think upon them whose parch'd eyes are dry,
Drain'd of their tears—an awful human drought !
Go, thou, in haste to join the dark array
Of them whose names Time stoops to write in hell !'
I heap'd the world with dead : their whiten'd bones
Lie like Death's harvest thro' the saddened land,
A long-drawn charnel-house from sea to sea.
Millions have died for me, and all in vain.
I sent them to perdition. In my dreams

Dead legions rise and dumbly curse my name,
And nations blast me with their silent eye.
The awful memory of my bloody deeds
Lies heavy on my being, and their thought
Blackens my shrinking soul!

But that is past,
So let them sleep with them who went before.
Ambition hath misled me. My false star
Hath lur'd and led me on to my destruction,
And I am all undone! Would I had liv'd
Far from rude camps and hurricanes of war,
Tilling the quiet fields, my peaceful hours
Spent in toil's innocent warfare, and my nights
Fill'd with the fragrance of a well-spent day;
My only battle-field the golden meads,
My sword the sweeping scythe. O never thus!
Never for me the unstrung belt of Peace.
Better an hour of soul-exulting joy
Than slimy centuries of stagnant days;
Better the rapture of the noon of war,
The fiery shock of squadrons in the field,
The brazen trumpet blown for the headlong charge.
O, to have died where joyful bugles sang,
And music drew the broken ranks of war
Amid the riot of Death's carnival!
And I had pass'd, in ecstasy of soul,

Thro' those dark gates of Death, wide open thrown,
Borne by the rush of men. Lo ! here I sit,
Bereft of all, behind the world's dark door ;
My kingdom narrow'd to this sea-bird's perch,
Like Patience sitting at the gate of Time.
And now the play is ended—life is o'er,
The rest is but a pitiful mockery.
Time is no more, and Hope and Fear but words
That have no meaning. I am sick of all,
And am aweary of this living death :
Let me be number'd with the nameless dead
Who lie uncoffin'd. Let me be forgot,
And vanish from remembrance of the world.
Let this frail frame go down into the grave,
And mingle with the dust from whence it came.

Now may the high-appointed faculties,
The ministers of the mind, forsake their trust
And leave their batter'd tenement : Reason now,
The anointed warder of the soul, may sleep ;
Cast down his sceptre and the kingly crown,
And leave his thronèd seat : now Memory may,
With sacrilegious hand, break ope the urn,
Uncase the hoarded records of the mind,
And give them to the keeping of the winds :
Now Hope may darken down her silver lamp,

That did so lovingly foretell the dawn,
Standing on tiptoe looking to the East ;
And Patience, sitting on the shore of time,
Write with her finger idly on the sand.
Henceforth is neither Hope, nor Joy, nor Fear,
But only Death, that doth enclose them all—
Death, that doth cut the tangled cord of life
That cannot else be loos'd—immortal Death,
The great physician that defeats himself,
Of all God's gifts the latest and the best.

IN THE FOREST.

HERE in this grove, this solemn fane monastic,
This cage of singing birds,
Where Time forbears his work iconoclastic,
To mutter mystic words :

How well to stand, beyond the noisy world,
Within this minster green,
'Neath arching elms with banners all unfurl'd,
Where foot hath never been.

Here, where no cares with fretful jarrings cavil,
The air is but my slave,
And Time a yearning, eager to unravel
The lightest wish I crave.

Here, where Earth's curtains all are drawn asunder,
The drowsy moments roll,
And life is one long draught of sunny wonder,
Quaff'd from a golden bowl.

I breathe the air in larger, fuller measure !
I drink great draughts of wine,
And steep my soul in ecstasy of pleasure,
Until I am divine.

Amid the glamour of the ringing forest
I walk, and life is new,
While thou, O human heart, with joy explorest
To find its hidden clue.

For now the earth unlocks its mystic spaces
Till, to its inmost core,
I know the wonders of its secret places,
That shall be hid no more.

Immortal rhapsodies my soul inherit,
Life's troubles fall away,
And subtle yearnings breathe thro' all my spirit,
Interpreting the day.

I feel my being swell with thoughts prophetic,
As here I ope my lungs,
And walk amid these avenues ecstatic,
Dower'd with the gift of tongues.

Across the shady woodland web, for ever,
The sun's bright shuttles fly,
Till the recesses of the forest quiver
With gift of prophecy.

My spirit is uncag'd, and, like an eagle,
Soars on the stately air
That over all, with presence calm and regal,
Broods like a silent prayer.

I draw the bolts that bar its eager going,
Fling wide the gates of Time,
And feel the fresh'ning breezes swiftly flowing
From out the Past sublime.

* * * * *

O woodland forms set round with bright-eyed daisies,
O leafy tents of song,
Where, all day long, the birds weave sunny praises,
Incredulous of wrong ;

Where Earth's sweet bards, priests of your woodland
altars,
Green fountains of the sod,
Sing their last hymn, as day's bright footstep falters,
Close to the ear of God :

I hear the revels of your high encampment
In snatches lightly flung,
And listen to the songs of gay enchantment
No poet yet hath sung.

Students of Time, and wisest of earth's sages,
Whose inmost spirit sips
The secret of the knowledge of the ages,
God's finger on your lips,

From out whose heart distils a subtle essence
Whereon the years have fed,
Who argue not, save by your hoary presence,
But are, and all is said ;

Wonders and miracles enfold your being,
Grave teachers of the brooks,
Who hold a wisdom, wondrous and far-seeing,
Writ in your leafy books.

Warders ye are whose footsteps never wander,
Set in Time's patient plan,
Green silences that dumbly stand and ponder
Beyond the life of man.

Garners of all earth's wisdom and its glory,
Gray with the dust of Time ;
How spacious were the chambers of its story
When ye were in your prime !

Your heads in silence 'gainst the ages leaning,
Ye whisper soft and low
A mystic tongue, whose dim, unfathom'd meaning
Only a child might know.

Ye wrap yourselves in silences eternal,
Yet unto them who seek
Ye stretch soft hands from doorways of the vernal
In supplication meek.

Tho', through the curtain of your green existence
My soul may never reach,
Yet still my spirit strives, with mute insistence,
To intercept your speech :

Catch from your lips the dumb unspoken message,
In utterance clear and full,
Whereof all knowledge seemeth but the presage
Taught in your ancient school.

Out of the silence of your acquiescence,
Out of your central calm,
Thro' dim communings with your inmost essence,
I know now what I am.

Life stands erect, o'ercharged with sunny wonder—
Not now a puny thing
That vainly strives to rend its bonds asunder,
And waves a fretful wing.

High overhead I bear my airy burden,
No more a heavy load ;
But now a soaring thing, a precious guerdon,
A banner borne for God.

Life is no wav'ring wish, no sapling leaning,
Sway'd by a fitful gust ;
But still the flow'ring of some patient meaning,
Inevitably just.

Time lifts the fringes of her seamless curtain
From off the cowering age,
And with a new-born vision, sure and certain,
I read her sacred page.

I know earth's glories with a sudden wonder ;
The scales drop from my eyes
That see the veil of Nature rent asunder,
With start of glad surprise.

For thro' communings with her brooding spirit—
Thro' forms and sights uncouth,
My soul with eager rapture doth inherit
Her everlasting truth.

And thus I go, my being calmed and strengthened,
As from a house of prayer ;
Like one whose stretch of view hath leap'd and
lengthen'd,
And broadened unaware.

Tho' from the glories of the further vision
Dim walls our lives divide,
Yet still I feel the touch of hands Elysian,
And Life is justified.

Tho' Time be but a pathway, blindly leaning,
And life is but a cry,
Yet still I smile ; I read its mystic meaning—
God is, and cannot lie.

THE PASSING OF THE KING.

(Whitehall, February 6th, 1685.)

‘DRAW back the curtain,’ said the dying king,
‘And let me see the day’; and, turning round
His wearied head, he looked his last on life.

Morning lay dreaming on the far-off hills,
And, near at hand, the sleeping city lay
Silent as death. Across its stony leagues
No murmur came, and from its slanting roofs
There hung no wav’ring pennon of blue smoke
Shading the morning air. The loving light
Fell like a benediction on the scene,
As if God blessed the sleepers unaware :
Statesman and courtier and the common poor
Lay waiting in the vestibule of death.
There were the perfumed minions of his court,

They who so oft had feasted at his board,
And laughed and quaffed in easy revelry,
And fawn'd upon him as he were a god,
And now slept deep within their silken beds,
Heavy with wine and feasting of the night ;
And, when the day was come, would wake and yawn,
And as they smooth'd their hair and strok'd a curl,
Would stop to ask for tidings of the King,
And curse the chance that gave their joy a pause.
Not one of them would drop a passing tear
For him that was their lord, not one forego
The daily pleasures of his ordered round ;
But when the time of mourning was o'erpast
Would drain the cup, and toss their caps in air,
And cry with eager joy, ' Long live the King !'
And they, the fair, frail wantons of his mood,
Born of a moment's wish, playthings and toys
Whom he had loved and flattered, painted boats
That sailed across the sea of his desires,
Sucked by the seething whirlpool of his lust—
Which of them all, so petted of his hand,
The dainty darlings of a summer day,
Would mourn his loss? which of them lay aside
Her carven dulcimer or flashing fan
To wring her jewell'd hands? which of them stay
Her maiden's fingers as they sought to twine

Flowers in her hair, or clasp her neck with gold ?
Not one of all his kingly bounty fed.
Another lord would take his vacant place,
And fill their fickle hearts. The giddy world
Would move in its accustomed ways again,
And he not there.

He turned him from the thought
For it was bitter to him, and his soul
Rebell'd against it. Death was standing by,
A kinglier king than he was at his door.
Deep had he drunk of life's enchanted bowl,
Draining the magic beaker of its wine ;
But now the cup was empty, and the lees
Were in his mouth, and bitter to the taste.
And he must go out from the warmth of day
Into the gloom of night ; must leave behind
Song, and the wine-cup, and the joy of friends ;
Put off the splendour of his earthly robes,
Sceptre and crown and royal panoply,
Don his dun gown, and, taking in his hand
His pilgrim staff, must face the dark alone,
A king no longer. Mightier now than he
The foot-sore beggar crouching at his gate ;
For Death was pushing him from off his throne,
And soon would strip him of his borrow'd state,
And thrust him forth, a shivering suppliant,

Before another Lord. O heavy day !
Comfort was dead, and Hope—Faith's youngest born—
Time's standard-bearer on the march of life,
Droop'd her bright pennon, and with wistful eyes,
Stood mutely by his bed ; no more her aid
Avail'd him, nor her patient constancy.
He closed his eyelids, and his tired soul
Stray'd wearily across the wav'ring past ;
And thro' the open doorway of his brain
Dim spectres entered, Banquo-like, at will,
And many shades oppressed him, and some strove
To hide themselves away ; until one came,
Stronger and stern of mien, and with his hand
He rolled before his sight weird fantasies,
And called wan prisoners from the vault of Time.

The city now was stirring, and the smoke
That rose, like incense, from a thousand homes,
Speaking of busy housewives at their toil,
Lazily gather'd in the upper air,
And, fold on fold, flowed silently away ;
Till to the vision of the dying man,
Whose crumbling brain let slowly go its hold,
It seem'd that once again, as in the past,
The fire-fiend set his torch within his fields,
And once again the flaming ocean roll'd

Its flashing waves across the sleeping town.
And from the watch-towers clang'd the loud alarm,
And men grew gray with terror at the sight,
And women wrung their hands, and cried on God,
And fathers ran about the throngèd streets,
And drums were beat, and shuddering bugles blown ;
And on high carven balconies men stood
And whisper'd low, with horror on their tongue,
And at his desk the merchant grew afraid,
And in his home the miser clutch'd his gold,
And in the hall the gambler dropp'd his cards,
And in the street the children ceas'd their play.
And workshops were forsook, and looms were left,
And doors stood open, and the house was still,
And all was grief and terror.

And again

The scene was changed, and thro' his misty brain
New sights were crowding fast ; and now he saw
A silent city, lonesome as the grave,
Accursèd, darkened, vast, upon whose head
A mighty horror lay ; and in her streets
Men shunn'd their kind, and crept with loathing past.
The looms stood silent, and the forge was still,
No toiler plied his craft, no stone was laid ;
Within the markets none would buy or sell,

And in the granaries lay the corn untouched,
And trembling servants left their task and fled,
And none would tend the sick, but left them there,
To live or die alone. And in the streets
The grass grew up between the silent stones,
And horses stood forgotten in their stalls,
And carts grew red with rust within the yard.
The knocker slumber'd on the drowsy door,
And on the flags the fearful footstep fell
With sudden clang ; and under stricken roofs
Men sat and gazed with eyes where madness hid,
And husbands fled their wives, and brother pass'd
His brother when they met, and fathers grew
To hate their children ; and in every home
Lay blacken'd corpses, and no man would stay
To watch his neighbour, and the lover shunn'd
The nestling maiden of the day before ;
The bridegroom left the bride of yesterday ;
The mother push'd the infant from her breast.
And ever tumbrils stumbl'd thro' the night,
And ghostly lanterns flash'd athwart the gloom,
And ever from the dark there came a cry,
' Bring out your dead ! ' and at the sickening sound
Men cross'd themselves, and shiver'd in their beds.
The churches stood neglected, open-door'd,
No bell, outflowering into sudden song,

Swung its sweet incense on the shuddering air.
High in the gloomy belfry all alone,
The sexton doz'd ; within his furthest room
Sat the unshaven priest ; no wedding chime
Sweetened the air, no birthday peal was there.
The child, unwelcomed, came into the world,
The dying went unshrived, and over all
Perpetual horror brooded like a curse—
A city of the dead, where all the day
Death in his winding-sheet stalk'd grimly forth,
While he, the mighty, God-anointed king,
Sat in his halls, and watch'd his people die ;
And in the palace, heedless of their woe,
His courtiers feasted, and the mirth went on ;
And he had barr'd his doors against their cry,
And strove with song and dances to forget
The horror of the time.

And then it seem'd
Death took him by the hand, and led him thro'
The peopled streets that gibber'd as he went,
Until they pass'd the city's utmost bounds,
And came into a field where gleaming bones
Were flung in heaps, and grisly skeletons
That grinn'd a ghastly welcome in his face.
' Lo, here,' said Death, ' is thy abiding place.

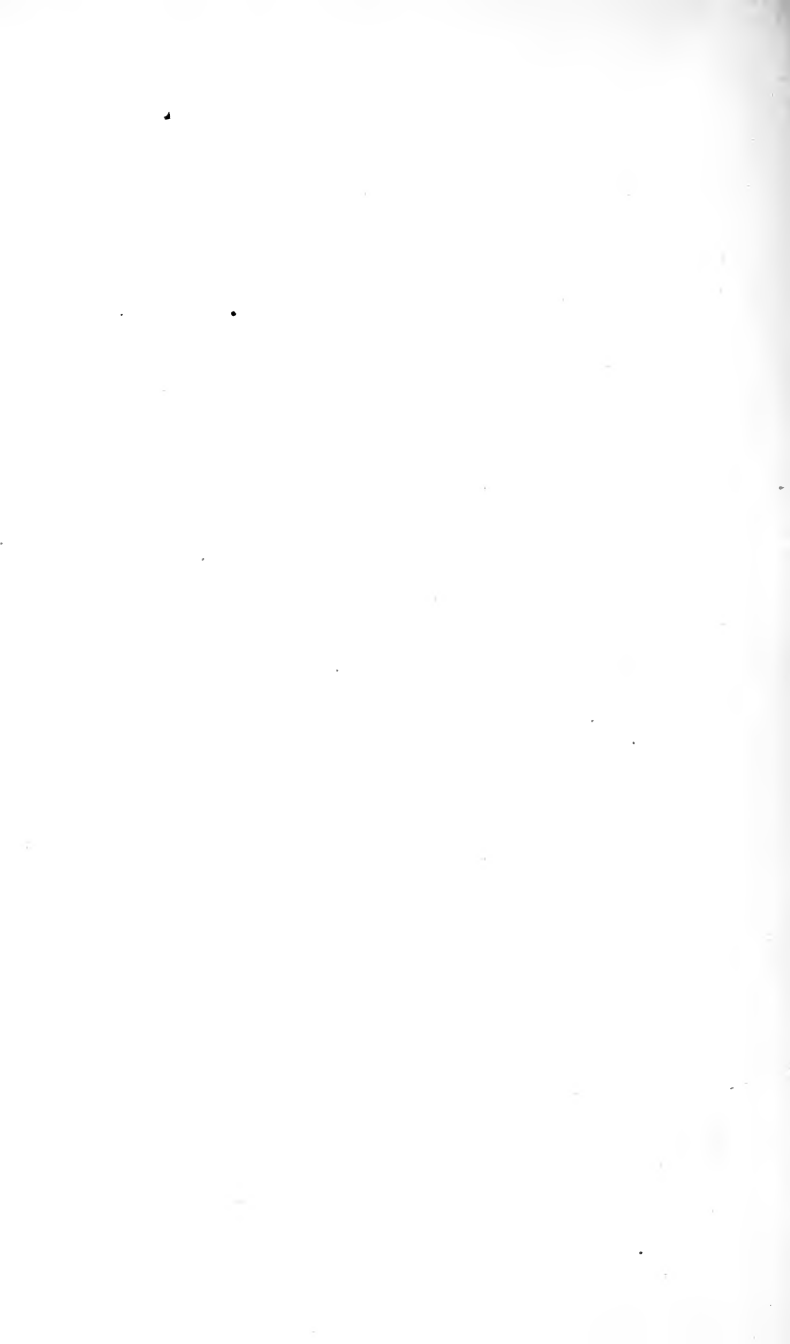
Here have I builded thee a steadfast house
That shall outstay the palaces of kings.'
And looking down he saw an open grave,
Wherein, with clammy hands, Death laid him down
And with a mountain blotted out the day.

And when the watchers look'd they found no more
The living monarch, but there in his room
The icy clay of him who was the King.

THE FIRST SNOWDROP.

SNOWBIRD upspringing from the dark ;
Cleaving thy way with pallid wing ;
Lo ! God hath loos'd thee from His ark
To bring earth tidings of the Spring.

SHORT POEMS



THE POET.

POET, standing far apart,
Sadden'd by the world's sin ;
Look into thy human heart,
Tell us what thou see'st within :

Show us what thou findest there,
Thou hast sight of wondrous things
In thy ken are visions fair, .
In thy soul a throstle sings.

Chant no more an idle lay,
Thou hast tidings to impart ;
Tell us what thou cam'st to say,
Speak thy message, and depart.

Preach the life of simple needs,
 Kindly pleasures, peaceful days ;
Mould thy songs in noble deeds,
 Live thy poems, live thy lays.

Drink the spirit of thine age,
 Seize thy day, and hold it fast ;
Yet within thy pictur'd page,
 Mingle something of the past.

Bring us from the ancient days
 Back the far primeval youth ;
Bring us back the ancient ways,
 Ancient faith, and ancient truth.

Sing us songs of sober mirth,
 Let the glad enchantment grow,
Till we feel the jocund earth
 Broaden round us as we go.

Lay thee down in Nature's lap,
 Lean not on an idle art ;
Nestle close, till thou may'st hap
 To hear the beating of her heart.

Let her arms thy being fold,
 Child of Nature at thy birth ;
Drawing strength, like him of old,
 From contact with thy mother-earth.

Stand no more in grief alone,
 Future generations may
Reap the harvest thou hast sown,
 Head of gold, and feet of clay.

A SONG OF NEED

I.

STATESMEN, rulers of the land,
Teach the nation something good !
Something nobly, wisely plann'd,
Give the starving people food.

Give us, to instruct the crowd,
A strong voice, ringing calm and clear,
Whose trumpet-accent, stern and loud,
Shall make the great world pause to hear.

Acts of law, and feats of state,
Sessions full of noise and wind ;
Edicts of imperial weight
That thrust asunder while they bind—

For these I care not : this I prize,
This alone in Church or State—
Make the people truly wise,
Make the people truly great.

Right the injustice of the past,
Heal the wrongs of long ago ;
And remember, at the last,
Ye shall reap as ye shall sow.

2.

Preachers ! servants of the Lord,
Of your wisdom something give—
Something, be it but a word,
That may teach us how to live.

Hearken, learnèd doctors all !
Grant us something for our need—
More of thought to stir the soul,
Less of doctrine, less of creed.

Grant us, for we would be fed,
Something we can make our own ;
When the people ask for bread
See you give them not a stone.

Science passes. Be it so,

We ask not now the how or why :

This alone we seek to know—

How to live, and how to die.

OUR LITTLE LIFE.

WHAT boots our little life, you say,
Whose near horizon bounds our sight?
Our span is but a summer day,
And all our strivings end in night.
We toil for heights we shall not gain ;
We may not reap the seed we sow ;
And all the purpose of our pain,
Lies buried in the depths below.

Oh, shallow doubter ! know'st thou not
That we shall be the lords of time,
Who carry in our meanest thought
The purpose of an end sublime ?
For still our soaring spirit strives
To scale our mortal prison bars.
The dust of suns is in our lives,
And we are kindred with the stars.

Eternity shall be our sheet
To wrap us thro' the gather'd gloom,
And sun and moon shall grandly meet
To light us to our utmost doom.
Our feet shall spurn earth's low domain ;
And thro' the gleaming silence far
Our soaring footsteps shall disdain
The vantage of the furthest star.

What tho' we shed our dying days
In drifts around us as we go,
Till all the channel of our ways
Is choked with drifts of human snow?—
Our garner is Futurity.
Time gathers up the wither'd leaves
That fall in clusters from our tree,
And binds them into golden sheaves.

EARTH'S WONDER.

MIGHTIEST marvel of earth !
Mute reconciler of Fate,
Herald of God, at thy birth
Blowing, with baby-breath,
In thro' the open gate
Tidings of Life and of Death !

Half of thee longing of man,
Half of thee spirit of God,
He, ere thy being began,
Of an inanimate clod
Formed thee, in visible plan.

Fashion'd thee out of His earth,
Breath'd with His lips on thy clay,
Made thee, in right of thy birth,
Lord of the night and the day.

Gave thee, in sign of His love,
Doubts of the way to dispel—
Clue to His kingdom above ;
Choice of His heaven or hell.

Gave thee the pow'r to unlock
Gateways of Space and of Time ;
Taught thy weak footsteps to walk
Over a staircase sublime.
Gave thee, in gladness, to run
On thro' the ages afar,
Eyes that could gaze on the sun,
Hands that might reach to a star.

Master of art and of craft,
Builder of empires to be,
Gardener, eager to graft
Bud of thy life on earth's tree ;
Forging, in adamant link,
Out of the silence before
Chains that a demon might sink,
Wings for an angel to soar.

Warrior never dismay'd—
Lord of the wonder to be !
Legions of angels, array'd,
Stand to encounter for thee.

Lying, with passions at rest,
Far as the planets apart ;
Tempests asleep in thy breast,
Heaven and hell in thy heart.

THE MOUNTAINS ABOVE CORRIE.

SET by the waves that wash their patient feet
They wait—encompass'd by Time's purple dream,
Seeing within its everlasting stream
The currents of the Past and Future meet—
Waiting the coming of the Paraclete,
That hasteth not. Enigmas of the Lord !
Misers of guarded treasures, that hoard
Their sacred secret in a grasp supreme.
Sphinxes of earth, immovable and still,
Time's wrinkled cloak drawn close about their base,
Submissive in their fixed, primeval place,
Locked in the prison of God's awful will,
Whose cups the hands of Time for ever spill
Against the heart of man, set face to face.

MARCH.

BROWN month, that fill'st the throat of the year with
dust,

And the throats of the birds with song.

Warrior month, faithful and true to thy trust ;
Herald standing between the old and the new,

Ruddy, and strong, and true,

With one clear call to the doubting heart

Standing forlorn apart,

The windy slopes among.

There's a cry on the hills, and a stir in the heart of the
tree ;

And the earth awakes and opens its thousand eyes ;

And the dead once more arise ;

And visions of prophecy trouble the ancient woods,

And dimly-remembered moods—

Vague thoughts of that which is yet to be.

And tiny hands reach up thro' the whiten'd grass,
And call to the winds as they pass ;
And baby-faces laugh in the sight of the sun ;
And the streamlets leap and run ;
And the stars burn blue-lights over the dead one's
grave,
And the night-winds wake and rave.

Let the sower sing as he scatters his slumbrous seed
And I will sing in my heart as I pass him by ;
For I dream of a jewell'd mead,
Lying asleep in the tent of an April sky.
And I know that, deep in the south, a banner'd host—
Silent singers of ballads sweet—
Marches on, in the night, with silent feet,
And tiny pennons toss'd.
And, far in the north, the prison'd founts break free
And music abroad is flung.
Hope hasteth over the laughing sea.
Glad tidings of great joy are come to me.
Again the world is young.

BEHIND THE STARS.

No glimmer from the trampled day ;
From heaven's lamps no friendly ray.
The stars are blown out by the wind.
And thro' night's cloisters, old and blind,
The lone moon gropes her dismal way,
Nor casts a thought behind.

All, all is dark. In heaven's house
The blinds are drawn, the writhing boughs
Toss their storm-stricken arms in fear.
The dead world lies upon her bier.
I walk night's gloomy vault alone,
Where Time and Space are all unknown.

O doubting soul, be not afraid !
Walk thou life's pathway undismayed.

Above the clouds, beyond the sun,
The sands of Time for ever run.
Forever there undaunted Fate
Keeps silent guard by Heaven's gate,
Watching the flash of scimitars
Light up the gloom of earthly wars.
There Hope sits, holding in her hand
Her broken dreams—life's deodand.
There Time, grown young—a youth divine—
Dips his bright love-locks deep in wine.
There Life and Death, by sin embroiled,
Meet, and are sadly reconciled.

There, in God's garden shining far,
Gleams the great lily-nenuphar.
There He hath hung his sickle bright
Upon the darken'd wall of night.
And there, unmoved, unseen, unknown,
Listening Life's clarion faintly blown,
Hearing deep, 'neath Creation's prayer,
Hell's silent cyclones of despair ;
Contemplating with sleepless eye
The crash of worlds or planet-jars,
God sits for ever thron'd on high,
 Behind the stars.

TO MY LADY.

CHIDE me not that I love thee, sweet ;
 Bid me not walk in grief apart ;
Frown not that at thy maiden's feet
 I lay my heart.

For as I go my 'soul expands
 To clasp the furthest flaming sun ;
And o'er my being's thirsting sands
 The tides of heaven run.

No puny earthly love is mine ;
 No weakly, wav'ring human thought ;
But some strange longing, half divine,
 In Heaven's garden caught.

All that is innocent and fair
Doth thy perfection mutely take.
All things in heaven and earth, I swear,
Are dearer for thy sake.

Yea, to my heart all mortal things
Creep closer for my swelling love—
The toiling brute, the bird that sings,
And man, and God above.

LINES FOR A NATIONAL OCCASION.

FRAGMENT

I.

FATHER of all, before whose throne do stand,
Ringed round in light to heaven's horizon dim,
Wave upon wave the white-rob'd cherubim,
Innumerable as the grains of sand ;
Who rockest in the cradle of Thy hand
The ocean as a tiny drop of dew ;
Before Whose sight is nothing old or new,
Is nothing great or small ; at Whose command
The mighty waves lie down to kiss Thy feet ;
Whose shadow is the sun, the wind Whose breath :
Whose lightest messengers are Life and Death ;—
Lord, with a smile Thy longing children greet,
Ingather'd here from out earth's furthest ways,
Who stand to-day before Thine unseen seat,
To hail Thine awful name with thunder'd praise.

2.

Lord of hosts, and King of kings, Who sittest enthron'd
afar,

In Whose hands are the issues of death and of crimson
war.

Lo ! we stand like an army encamp'd before Thy door,
The battle past, and our arms unslung and cleans'd from
gore ;

Bringing with us the pomp and splendour of kingly strife,
Roar of the trumpet's rage, and wail of the impotent
fife ;

Banners toss'd and blown by the breath of the silken
breeze,

Standards that struggle and strain in the depth of the
airy seas,

And the bugle's triumphant call, and the drum's mono-
tonous beat,

And the cannon, dreadful and slow, led captive along
the street.

Never again shall they stagger the hills like an earthquake
shock ;

Never the quivering watchfires dumbly the pale dawn
mock ;

Nor the tiger-sword, thirsting for blood, leap from its
clinging sheath,

Nor the living waves of men break cold on the shores of
Death,
Nor the challenge, sudden and clear, ring out on the
startl'd air,
Nor the drowsy sentry call from the tents on the hillside
bare,
Nor brother wrestle with brother in the longing of deadly
hate,
Nor wailing children in vain for their father's footsteps
wait.

No more shall the trumpet startle a peaceful land,
Blown by a luminous fate ;
No more the demon of war, with uplifted hand,
Wait by the gate.
Nor the shuddering flag be unroll'd,
Nor the drum's deep dirge be toll'd,
Nor the eagle-fife soar, screaming, high on the wind,
Chanting its song of death,
When the black-mouth'd cannon are sullenly waiting
behind,
And the trumpets hold their breath.
We have buried the past and its dead in a rude, red grave,
Dug by the hand of the brave ;
And the silent lips that met on a bloody field
The bond of death have seal'd.

THE WAYSIDE CHRIST.

SILENT, in the empty way,
Standing mutely all alone,
Like a creature turned to stone,
At the waning of the day,
Waiting by its stable-door,
All forgotten in the cold,
Hungry, weary, and footsore,
Scorned and sad, as He of old,
A wayside Christ, bearing the world's thong,
And kin to Him through wrong ;
The sport and fool of Time ;
Yet, out of patient suffering, sublime,
To whom, as on its back He rode,
He dower'd His legacy of woe,
And left it toiling here below,
To tread the weary path that He hath trod.

Type of the forgotten poor,
The world's ass that, at the rich man's door,
Stands, meekly asking to be fed,
Sadly wishing he were dead ;
 And, in the waning of life's day,
Waits, weary, hungry, and footsore,
 In the winter evening gray,
At God's closed stable-door.

PARTINGS.

MEETINGS and partings—such are of our lives.

Summer and winter we are wrench'd apart
In never-ending sorrow, heart from heart :
Children from parents, husbands from their wives,
And lovers with their sad, unearthly eyes,
Breathing their pain in slow, heart-choking sighs,
That speak their anguish sharp as gleaming knives.

And so they go lamenting. One by one

God blows their candles out with certain breath,
To light them later at the fiery sun.

Weak human hearts that bar the way to death,
Striving to hinder, with unseemly strife,
The hand that seeks to ope the door of life.

THE DAISY.

Ho ! tiny page at Nature's court,
Train-bearer of the Spring,
Who clasp'st a sun, for thy dis-sport.
Within thy mystic ring.

Who hid'st away thy woodland wealth—
A miser unaware—
And tak'st the passer's heart by stealth,
From out thy sunny lair.

Small pilgrim that, unseen, dost grope
Thro' life thy hidden way,
Who to the passing winds dost ope
The sleepy eye of day,

The Daisy

Standing on tiptoe to uprear
Thy head above the grass,
In whisper'd accents quick to praise
The seasons as they pass.

Oh, meek unworldling of the woods,
I love thy pleading face ;
And I would laud thy patient moods,
Thine unconsidered grace.

Dear to the poet's heart art thou,
And dear art thou to mine,
Who lay'st against the world's hot brow
That small, cool face of thine.

Wide-eyed companion of the birds,
Who, with sight clear and full,
Dost sit and spell thy childish words
In Nature's open school.

Child of the Centuries that came
And made thee with a look,
Lo ! God hath writ His awful name
Within thy tiny book.

THE LOVERS.

ACROSS the drunken earth they go,
Life's goblets in their hands,
Walking on paths of starry snow
To undiscovered lands.
On by the bridge of the vaulted sky,
And over the leagues afar,
They have hung their hearts on the rainbow high,
And have set on their heads a star.

They stand on the sacred hills above,
Watching the lonely ships,
And as they gaze, with the eyes of love,
They grow to each other's lips.
They have eaten their fill of the sacred bread,
They have drunk of the sacred wine,
And the manna of God that their souls has fed
Hath made them half divine.

Children of God, they are born again,
And angels know their face ;
Their feet of heedless haste are fain
To seek the Holy Place.
Unto the presence-chamber vast,
Lost in each other's eyes,
Twining their arms, they come at last,
Deep in a glad surprise.

And the angel-guard drops, swift and low,
The point of his flaming sword ;
They cannot be denied—they know
The password of the Lord.
But woe is me ! they are all undone
They shall suffer unending things
Who have sprung aloft, till the fiery sun
Hath singed their stolen wings.

For never again shall they know content,
Or tread life's simple ways,
Thro' the gates of the starry firmament
Whose eyes have sought to gaze.
They have fallen headlong who have tried to soar,
Vanquished they lie below ;
Nor heaven nor earth can keep them more
Who have dared such things to know.

COURAGE !

O SHRINKING heart, why standest thou dismayed ?
None ever lived in vain. The meanest soul
That dips his hand with Christ into the bowl
Hath power to make the serried fiends afraid,
And backward hurl their slanting hosts array'd ;
Hath power to cool hell's furnace with his tears,
Or with a cry to move the hurrying spheres,
And all Time's far abyssmal deeps invade.
Fear not, tho' fierce storm-trumpets seaward call,
But spread thy heart to make a mighty sail ;
O'er silken seas the drowsy vessels crawl,
But swiftly run before the bellowing gale.
Who greatly falls is stronger for his fall,
And they soar highest who ne'er feared to fail.

FATE.

DARK weaver of the ceaseless loom,
Who standest by the Throne,
Wrapt in impenetrable gloom,
Eternally alone.

I know thee not, nor care to know,
Who veil'st so close thy face ;
Who, with insistence calm and slow,
Dost draw the human race.

Nor wealth nor power from thee I crave,
Nor Fame's loud trumpet-blast,
But only this : a quiet grave,
And silence at the last.

ENGLAND.

February, 1896.

ENGLAND, when I think of thee,
All thy bannered foes o'erthrown,
And thy trumpets all unblown,
I could weep for joy to see.

Kings have sought to do thee wrong,
Lying in the darkened way ;
Thro' the fierce and dense array
Thou hast come more fresh and strong.

Nations grow about thy knees,
Flow'ring round thy rugged form ;
In the day of stress and storm
Thou shalt lean thy head on these.

Many hate thee for thy wealth,
All men envy thee thy store ;
Sitting by thine open door,
Many stab thy back by stealth.

Be it so. Their mood is vain ;
Love and hate are cheaply bought.
Prize thou only what is wrought
On the anvil of thy pain.

Not for mighty acts of fame,
Not for deeds by land and sea,
Do I chiefly honour thee,
Hold in reverence thy name ;

But for that which thou hast done
In the fulness of thy years,
Standing 'twixt thy hopes and fears
In the brightness of the sun.

Let thy deeds of truth be known,
Hold thou grandly by the right,
Turn thou ever to the light.
Better thou shouldst stand alone

Than that dishonour be thy mate ;
For if thou take shame by the hand,
Loose-rooted in the shifting sand
Will be the fabric of the State.

BURNS.

His soul sprang upwards, as a bird
Spirits whirring from the brake,
Mounting, on pinions of the word,
His matin-song to make.

And on the portals of the air
He sang a song so sweet,
The lark, enraptured unaware,
Hung silent at his feet.

How doth the clamour of Time's praise
Invert his low estate
Who left the mire of earthly ways
To sing at Heaven's gate.

BUILDERS.

LIVE thou thy life with loving care,
The while the changing seasons roll,
And thou shalt fashion, unaware,
A stately mansion for thy soul.

Marble or mud, we needs must raise
The storied palace or the cot,
With cunning art contriving ways
To glorify our mortal lot.

Highest or lowest, which we will,
The final touch 'tis ours to give.
In woe or weal remember still
The greatest art is yet to live.

There lies a mighty sea of life
 Betwixt the wise man and the fool ;
The warring of a little strife
 Makes it an ocean or a pool.

The aim is all—the thing is naught,
 Whate'er the teaching of the creeds ;
True greatness lieth in the thought :
 A life is greater than its deeds.

THE BROOK.

WONDER of sylvan woods,
Born of the gladness of May,
Gathering, day by day,
Charm of earth's daintiest moods.
Innocent walker in sleep,
Prattling softly and low
Mystical words as you go
On to the infinite deep.

Flinging your laughter abroad,
Gurgling with innermost mirth,
Caught from the birds at your birth,
Turning the Sibylline leaves,
Conning the lessons of God,
Reading the riddles Fate weaves,
Telling the secrets of earth.

Gathering into your cup
Drippings of heavenly dew,
Drinking in ecstasy up
Draughts of enchantment anew.
Weaving aloud, as you run
On to the lowlands afar,
Cords to encircle the sun,
Nets to entangle a star.

Empires ancient and great—
Many a mighty State—
Hath fallen, and passed away,
Since thou in this flow'ry dell
First tinkled thy tiny bell,
Calling the world to pray.

We, in vain-glorious pride,
Pass like dim shadows away—
Silences borne by the tide,
Lingering here for a day.
Thou, in the centuries gone,
Saw'st the beginnings of Time,
Sawest life's earliest dawn,
Sawest the earth in its prime.

Child of the mountainous waste,
Born of the infinite main ;
Rushing, with eagermost haste,
Back to thy mother again.
Out of the mist and the rain,
Out of the deeps of the air,
Nurs'd in the elements' pain,
Swathed in the ocean's despair.

Go thro' the desolate lands,
Emblem of infinite hope ;
Loosen, and lay on the sands,
Coils of thy crystalline rope.
Then, like a beautiful prayer,
Freed from your uttermost load,
Back to the wastes of the air
Melt, at the bidding of God.

A CHILD PRAYING.

CHILD with the flaxen hair,
Kneeling beside thy bed,
Clasping thy hands in prayer,
Bowing thine innocent head ;
Whispering close to God's ear
Fragments of innocent speech,
Legions of cherubim reach
Out of the endless to hear.
How swiftly, and all unaware,
Thy baby hands ope Heaven's door.
Hell, as it listens in fear,
Is moved with a newer despair.
Not God, as He sitteth alone,
High on the infinite throne,
Shall listen unmoved to thy prayer.

CLARENCE.

(*January 14, 1892.*)

FUNERAL and wedding bells
Stirring the heavy air—
Hark ! how the discord knells
Its dirge of low despair.

Funeral and wedding bells,
Low as the whisper'd breath
That, as the tumult swells,
Bids Life clasp hands with Death.

Thro' the wide-opened gates
Surges the human tide ;
But still the bridegroom waits
The summons of the bride.

Last in the measured race,
 Why comes the lover late
While one, with veiled face,
 Waits by the outer gate?

Palace, nor kingly state
 Avail, nor beck'ning throne,
Nor armed men who wait
 Beside that heart of stone.

For, in the wintry night,
 The angel, passing by,
Paused in his eagle flight,
 And set his spear a-nigh.

Upon that stately door
 There stood no mark divine,
No splash of sudden gore,
 Death's crimson countersign.

Forth, in the silent hour,
 From out the guarded fold
Went, like a ravish'd flow'r,
 The first-born, as of old.

Funeral and wedding bells
Fretting the wintry air—
Hark, how the discord tells
A nation's dumb despair!

Funeral and wedding bells,
Low as the whisper'd breath
That, thro' the ages, tells
That Life shall conquer Death.

THE SHIPS.

O SHIPS that go downcast and pale,
With backward flags and sails unfurl'd,
Downtrodden by the hurrying gale,
And blown in fear about the world :

Who dare to know the dread unknown,
Who tread the path that none hath trod,
Pale pilgrims of the starry zone,
And travellers by the lights of God :

Ye hold by hands ye cannot see,
Ye lean on help that lies afar,
And wander darkly on the sea,
Groping your way from star to star.

No guiding pathway lies before,
No footprints linger as you go ;
The wild wind rushes evermore
To smooth the foaming tracks below.

In darkest night ye journey on,
Secure as in the crystal day ;
And, calm in faith, await the dawn
That slowly broadens on your way.

* * * * *

O toilers on the restless floor,
And searchers of the shifting plain,
Your secret shall be hid no more,
Nor lesson that ye teach be vain :

They run a race whose end is sure,
They steer a course no danger bars,
They turn not after any lure,
Whose help and hope is in the stars.

THE DYING POET.

HE lay upon his carven bed,
Forgot, untended, and alone,
His dreams in fragments round his head,
His being turn'd to stone.

And whisp'ring spirits hov'ring near,
His dying sorrows seemed to know :
And mystic voices on his ear
Were falling soft and low.

Said one, ' He's sinking fast ; his breath
Is but a weak and failing thing—
A flutter from the gates of Death,
Borne faintly from Time's wing.

‘No more a hurricane of life,
That, like a sweet and fresh’ning gale,
Push’d grandly back the bounds of strife,
And curv’d Thought’s mighty sail ;

‘That, far outsoaring earthly wars,
Its tempest-clarion boldly blew,
And, sweeping past the startl’d stars
Rock’d Heaven’s doors anew.’

Another said, ‘He liv’d in vain.
The earth was but his prison-cage.
He fretted out his heart and brain
Against his iron age.

‘Out through Creation’s open door
He wander’d at his birth.
A simple flow’r to him was more
Than all the dross of earth.’

Another said, ‘His brimming cup
Ran o’er with consecrated wine,
With fever’d thirst he drank it up,
Until he grew divine.

- ‘ But still the brute his spirit sapp’d,
And led his erring feet astray,
Until he sank, a soul entrapp’d,
A god enclos’d in clay.
- ‘ His passions, in a demon-sport,
With laughter dragg’d him slowly down,
And, climbing o’er his human heart,
Despoil’d him of his crown.
- ‘ The sweetest of earth’s apples turn’d
To ashes on his eager lips ;
And Life’s inverted raptures burn’d
His soul like living whips.
- ‘ Alas ! he could not be content
To eat of Time’s unleaven’d bread,
But ever saw the firmament
Through eyelids of the dead.
- ‘ He lightly trod the bridge of blue ;
But, while his soul was glad,
He look’d through Heaven’s gates and knew
Such sights as drove him mad.’

Another said, ' He never found
The lifelong things his spirit sought ;
But, wand'ring in a weary round,
His searchings came to naught.

'That which in life he sought the most
Went by him like a fever'd dream ;
But what upon the earth he lost
He'll find by God's great stream.'

VIOLETS.

O BLUE orbs of the sunny earth
That stare with wonder at your birth,
 Lost in a glad surprise ;
But, new-awakened from 'Time's sleep,
'Neath your green coverlet you peep
 With half-unclosèd eyes.
Now, with my heart I look, and lo !
Upon my mortal ken there grow,
Like leaves from out your pictur'd books
Visions of fragrant twilight ways,
And lovers shy that stand and gaze,
 Half-hid in leafy nooks.

FORGET-ME-NOT.

BLUE, blue the sea—blue as the eye of God—
And blue the temple of the air,
Unclouded, solitary, bare ;
And blue the hills that linger, low and broad—
Blue, all blue.
O friends, a little hour ago,
Lost in the woodlands, drunk with dew,
I came to know
The meaning of a lesson learnt anew,
And saw, with quick surprise,
A flow'ret, strangely wise,
Unlock Creation with a tiny key,
And, with a look, lay bare to me
The wonder of this simple thought :—
Heaven and earth and sea to-day are God's Forget-
Me-not.

TO SOME PREACHERS.

WORTHY masters, lend an ear :
All your dogmas are in vain
If your teachings, unaware,
Reach not further than our brain.

Misty methods, gnarl'd gnomes
Nurtur'd in an ancient mould,
Learning hid in musty tomes—
These are useless, dead and cold ;

Stones that bar our progress these,
Stumbling-blocks before our feet,
Holding us by slow degrees
Where the thought and action meet.

Science teaches—new and old—
Marvels, that we stand and stare,
Till we feel its arms enfold
Life about us everywhere.

Yet of these we reckon not,
Deem them idle as the wind ;
Count them but as symbols wrought
In the workshop of the mind.

We would hear of higher things :
Give us of your garner'd store,
Till we feel immortal wings
Lift us upwards more and more.

Meanings deep enfold our days,
Wonders lie about our feet,
Till we stammer forth our praise
Walking in the busy street.

Let us know the Christ you preach,
And the things that He has said ;
Let your far example reach
From the living to the dead.

To some Preachers

Set our footsteps in the way
That His willing feet have trod ;
Teach our stubborn tongues to pray—
Show us how to come to God.

Show us clear what He hath plann'd ;
Make our strivings manifest—
What is ready to our hand
That is fittest, that is best.

Let your teachings stir our souls,
Then, howe'er our spirits swerve,
Every hour Creation rolls
Nearer to the Christ we serve.

Show us in the things you do
Witness to the charge He gave,
Be they many, be they few,
From the cradle to the grave.

Take the sinner by the hand,
Take the villain by the throat ;
Scourge the vices of the land ;
Thunder benefits forgot.

Tear the wrappings from our life
And the covering from our heart ;
Plunge the unresisting knife
Deep into the ailing part.

Pluck the mask from off the age ;
Slowly count its sordid gain,
Reckon up the human wage
Doubly paid with heart and brain.

Look beneath the crust of life.
Grapple with its hidden wrong ;
Mark the fratricidal strife
Of the weak against the strong.

Paint us not, with velvet word,
While we smugly sit at ease,
Honeyed pictures, smoothly slurr'd—
We have had enough of these.

Fingers pointing to the Lord,
We would hold you more and more ;
Lead us by a silken cord,
But, we pray you, walk before.

BEHIND THE SCREEN.

O FRIENDS who fume, and fret and rave,
And live your lives apart,
Encamp'd beside an open grave,
With death within your heart ;

Who shoot your arrows at the sun,
And threaten every star,
Ere yet the hempen rope is spun
To drag your fiery car ;

Who flout Creation with a sigh,
And spurn life with your foot,
And smite the planets, passing by
To kennel with the brute—

Wise fools, forbear ! Your deeds are vain
Who with high Heaven wage strife,
Who, with the hatchet of your brain,
Would rend the Book of Life.

Forbear to strive—your Titan zeal
Is somewhat overmuch.
These mighty gates of triple steel
Yield to an infant's touch.

Shout out your loudest, high and clear,
When to the fiends ye call ;
But prithee whisper softly here—
God stands behind the wall.

THE BEE.

BEE, swinging in your tent of blue
A sailor mid your airy shrouds,
Or wading ankle-deep in dew
New-fallen from the clouds •

Where meads breathe out their balmy moods
In sunny ecstasy, or where
The silent songsters of the woods
Fold their sweet-scented hands in prayer.

Gay Sultan of the garden-bed,
Whose maidens, waiting in a row,
Their honey'd gifts before you spread
In your bright flower-seraglio—

Where, high on head, a milkmaid tall,
The lily bears her yellow pail ;
Or dragon-fly upon the wall
Dries in the sun his wetted sail.

Or where, above the daisies meek,
The deadly poppies darkly brood,
Or tulip, with a stifled shriek,
Holds up her chalice, stained with blood.

Thief in the cupboard of the earth,
Sly pilf'rer of the garden-spoil,
Who mingle merchantry with mirth,
And sing for ever at your toil ;

Chanting your choral soft and low,
You labour in your flow'ry mart,
Teaching for ever as you go
The lesson of the cheerful heart.

VIRGIN SNOWS.

HIGH on the cold world's snowy roof,
Whose icy leagues the lone birds know,
Wove of the north wind's shadowy woof,
Stretch the great wastes of virgin snow.

There, in the blue night's solemn noon,
Like flowers from Heaven's casement cast,
They lie beneath the ghastly moon,
Held in a silence dim and vast.

Cold as the dead, forsaken heart,
Pure as the dreams of nuns asleep ;
Where musing angels stand apart
In contemplation deep.

There Silence, sick'ning for a sound,
Lays to the floes her aching ear ;
And there, by viewless fetters bound,
The hollow winds lie froze with fear,

Where in the long eternal gray,
Grasping his gleaming sword of ice,
Death sits for ever in the way
And shakes his loaded dice.

* * * * *

O pathless prairies of the North,
Swept by the snow-king's frosty breath ;
Where in the silent air walk forth
The everlasting feet of Death.

For ever breaks the solemn day
Rose-flushed across your pallid face ;
For ever round your slumbers play,
The lightnings of God's loving grace.

There in the silence of the night,
Waiting her earthly lord to greet,
The bride, array'd in garments white,
Chideth the bridegroom's laggard feet.

Whom purple eve nor crimson dawn
Bringeth to ope her icy door,
For God hath set His seal thereon
And sealed it evermore.

LIFE'S MEANING.

LIFE is the riddle, stern and cold,
God puts to every man,
Whose mystic meaning, æons old,
Runs thro' Time's hidden plan.

And what the answer?—‘Ye ask in vain
A low sad voice replies,
‘Within the leaves whose meaning plain
Was writ in Paradise.’

And still to-day the book lies there,
Wide-open to the sun,
Whose secret never hand shall bare
The while the ages run.

Yet every blade of the patient grass
That cowers beneath our feet
Strives with mute longing, as we pass,
God's message to repeat.

The wise birds sing it, the trees among,
That in dumb witness stand ;
But we heed them not, for they speak a tongue
We cannot understand.

And the ocean is calling from out its deep,
And wails to our heart always ;
It has roared itself hoarse, ere it sank asleep,
And will roar till the Judgment-day.

For we cannot know what they yearn to tell,
Nor fathom the dark decrees :
We never shall know it, in Heaven or Hell,
Until we become like these.

For only when Life and Death are one,
And the soul its home doth quit,
Shall we read, by the light of the dying sun,
What the hand of God hath writ.

SLEEP.

DIM, silent stretches of unconquer'd lands,
Where wailing winds unendingly do moan,
Making great dulcimers of forests lone ;
Fierce furnace-floors of sun-discolour'd sands,
Where by each palm a deep-brow'd shadow stands ;
Cold rocks that sit eternally alone,
Where hunters watch, like creatures turn'd to stone,
And peaks that clutch the clouds with bony hands—
All these are mine. Night opes my prison cell,
And with a touch doth set my spirit free
To range by Heaven's porch or gates of Hell,
Making me monarch of all things that be.
But Day with sightless scissors clips my wing,
And casts me down, a poor discrownèd king.

BIRDS IN WINTER.

O TINY revellers of June !

That wanton'd thro' the summer air,
Now, 'neath the winter's sun or moon,
God send you comfort in your care.

When earth is stone, and worms lie deep,
And, by the chimney's merry blaze,
Laid in his easy chair asleep,
The farmer dreams of summer days ;

When skaters swing upon the mere,
And boys run wild with ringing feet,
And all the prospect, dim and drear,
Is bounded by the silent street ;

You cow'r in barns and windy sheds,
And twitter feebly 'neath the eaves,
And in strange places make your beds,
And sadly eye the rotting leaves.

The feast is o'er, the revels done,
And now, poor prodigals, you wait,
Like feather'd outcasts of the sun,
Or Lazarus at the rich man's gate.

The thrushes' thrill, the cuckoo's call
Are mute, and only there and here
A shiv'ring robin on the wall
Croons by the deathbed of the year.

And I, a saddened' mourner, stand
In lowliness of soul apart,
Till May shall flood the golden land,
And wake anew the world's heart.

PATIENCE.

PERPLEX no more the drowsy ear of Time
With questionings vain, nor stand importunate
Before his door ; but teach thy soul to wait,
And with slow steps the stair of life to climb.
Pass calmly onward towards thy gradual prime,
Content in patient eagerness to know
Thy silent footsteps shoreward surely go,
And mutely strive towards an end sublime.

Grieve not that ever steeper, more and more,
The roadway grows, while o'er the gleaming path
With deeper gloom upon the way before
Death's shadow falls and threatens endless wrath—
Wait yet awhile. Life's misty madness past,
The blinds are drawn and daylight comes at last.

TO ANY WOMAN.

I ASK not of thy woman's heart—

Where weak and strong so strangely blend
That thou must ever stand apart
Unfathom'd to the end—

Nor intellect, nor power of brain

I ask, nor learning deep and broad,
Nor any art whose baleful gain
Lies 'twixt thy soul and God ;

No virile force in thee we seek

To lift thee to an earthly goal,
But this alone—the presence meek
And tender woman's soul.

Still, thro' coarse jest and bitter sneer,
Be loyal to thy lofty birth ;
And, standing 'twixt the far and near,
Be half of heaven, and half of earth.

MY KINGDOM.

WHOSE are these hills that stretch beyond the sight?
And these brave seas that lie
Hemming them round with music day and night?—
The lord of all am I.

Mine by the valour of the conquering heart,
And purpose of the all-embracing mind
That holds the curtains of the soul apart,
And year with year doth bind.

And I am lord of all the lands that are
Between the rising and the setting sun :.
Mine from the morning till the evening star—
Mine every one.

And from the prison of the breathing sea
Dim mystic voices call ;
And in the waning day dim shadows flee
Across the sunset wall.

Each sun-glad bird that sings beside its nest
Sings for my ear alone ;
And from the pale East to the golden West
Each flower for me is blown.

For me the tempests chant their deep-voiced psalms ;
The forests rave in sleep ;
And to my soul there come melodious calms
And contemplations deep.

For me the winds their loudest trumpets blow ;
The cataracts shout with glee ;
And whispered secrets of the long ago
Creep from the miser sea.

Across the leaning pastures of the heaven
Pass on my starry sheep ;
I call each silent wanderer forth at even,
And count them 'ere I sleep.

And mine the glory of each fiery wonder,
Suns of the awful night,
That thro' the abyss roll headlong on in thunder,
Resistless in their might.

All these are mine. The earth shall be my pillow,
And when I go to sleep
My dirge shall be the never-ending billow,
The everlasting deep.

But who shall dare to tread these realms immortal?
What hand unlock that door?
Lo! on the threshold of the sacred portal
God standeth evermore.

THE THRUSH.

A THRUSH sang out on the high elm-tree,
And I stood awhile to hear.
And I said, ' May such songs be sung for me
When I lie on my bier.'

For these are the singers of God most high
That carol about His feet ;
No Guelph nor Ghibelline e'er could buy
A funeral-dirge more sweet.

They sing the ballads of heavenly love,
Chanted so long ago,
That the larks bring down from the courts above
To scatter on earth below.

These are the songs that the angels chant
As they circle about the throne,
Weaving the web of the Covenant
That bindeth God alone.

And the earthly singers rehearse that song,
Who sing for the ear of man,
And their stolen music atones the wrong
In Time's mysterious plan ;

And the birds repeat, when they wake again,
The songs they have learnt in sleep,
Whose notes are links in the hidden chain
Whose folds our being keep.

Minstrels are these in the tents of earth
That spring from the sunny sod,
Who, with their voices of angel-mirth,
Sing in the cages of God.

THE MIRROR.

FRATE BENONI, servant of the Lord,
A shining light to many in the land,
Took one day idly in his shrivelled hand
The tiny mirror, hanging by a cord
Within the carven window of his cell,
And as his gaze upon its surface fell,
He steadfastly his countenance explored ;
And as he look'd there came into his mind—
With some weird fancy strangely intertwin'd—
A sudden longing, and he said, ' The Lord
Doth hold our lives reflected in His glass,
And with His eyes beholds my open soul
As in this mirror I survey my face,
And there, as on a dark-illumin'd scroll,
He reads the garner'd record of my days.'

And at the thought he breath'd a sudden prayer,
That to his mortal sight might be reveal'd,

As to God's eyes, all suddenly laid bare,
His naked soul, with no foul blot conceal'd.
And as he pray'd a trembling something grew
Into the mirror, dimly incomplete,
Until, with soul that shrank and stood, he knew
His inmost spirit's misty counterfeit.
And then, at last, o'erwhelmed and overcome,
Frozen with knowledge of the thing untold,
A living statue, eloquently dumb,
He stood all rigid, suddenly grown old,
For there, with eyes where horror glared aghast,
A human leprosy, and foul with sin,
He saw the form of his accusing Past
Rise up and point with mocking hand within.

And at the sight he cried with anguish'd haste,
'Lord! let me see no more,' and entering in
Straightway, with trembling footsteps, sad and slow,
Into God's earthly presence he did pass,
With grief o'erwhelm'd, and sank in silent prayer.
And when they looked they saw the dusky mass
Of raven hair was turn'd as white as snow;
The sudden flow'ring of his dumb despair—
A little foam upon a sea of woe.
Lord, let us see ourselves in that stern glass!

BLINDED.

READ me this riddle, ye whose steadfast vision
Can pierce the folds of thought,
And seek within the spirit's realms Elysian
Some clue divinely caught.

Lodg'd at our ease within God's habitation,
Guests at His daily board,
We pour before strange gods our deep libation,
And heap our earthly hoard.

We count earth's atoms, weigh the rushing planet,
Reckon the comet's speed,
Crush with our hands the mighty rocks of granite,
And grasp its golden seed.

We cleave the sunbeam, plumb the sunless ocean,
And hear the creeping grass,
And drink Time's lengthening wisdom in a potion,
As on the centuries pass.

Our lives are sicklied o'er with feeble wonder,
And, when we hence depart,
We sadly tread the path of silent thunder,
Clasping our fearful heart ;

Where one waits grim and ghostly in the shadow,
Cloaking his shining face,
Ling'ring to guide us thro' Death's starry meadow,
And lead us to our place.

O fearful souls ! that by Time's noiseless river
Waver and hold your breath,
And on the steep brink dumbly stand and shiver,
Dreading the plunge of Death,

Ye fear the bandage that God's hand doth fasten
Before our shrinking eyes,
Lest one should faint upon the way and hasten
Back thro' the trackless skies.

We stagger onward, blinded by earth's glory,
· And, when the day is past,
'Neath dark'ning skies we read life's mystic story,
And wisdom comes at last.

Forth from the unknown, out of Time's dark prison,
We walk, unused to sight ;
Our eyes are dazzled by life's sudden vision—
We cannot see for light.

TWO SONNETS.

I.

SHIP, that dost spread thy swelling wings to go
Across dim seas to lands of far away,
Whose path lies o'er the desert of sea-spray
That hangs between us and the world below,
Even now, while yet the favouring breezes blow,
I bid thee 'Hail!' and in a breath 'Farewell!'
Deep in my heart there tolls a passing bell,
The knell of parting joy, and, sinking low,
I see the sun of present hope descend,
And all my mortal sunshine turn to gray.
Now in the West unearthly glories blend
And, drunk with ecstasy, the dying day
Creeps all unwillingly towards its end.
O faithful heart! and thou so far away!

II.

ROLL on dark seas—ye cannot part us now.
Tho' ye heap up your hills until they roll
In myriad mountain-heights from pole to pole,
A moving world furrow'd by God's own plough ;
And tho' ye strike the pale ships till they bow
Their meek heads lying on the sicken'd sea,
Then, with a sudden terror, rise and flee
Before the bellowing north-wind's eerie sough ;
And tho' the lightning should with impious hand
Write on the wall of night God's fiery name ;
And tho' the thunder trumpet forth its blame :—
In vain ye strive to keep us heart from heart,
Locked in a silent spirit-clasp who stand.
Our souls have touched, and cannot be apart.

LIFE'S LESSON.

OUT from Life's quaint and many-windowed room

I look with curious eyes,

And feel, athwart the ever-gathering gloom,

My heart grow slowly wise.

For through the dimly-shifting light and shade,

And mid its wild unrest,

One truth I see, unmoved and undismayed,

Grow slowly manifest.

This thought is mine—a golden-wingèd key

Wherewith Life's gate I ope :—

No more in doubt along the dread to-be,

With helpless hands, I grope.

Who doeth willingly, he holdeth all
The wisdom of the years.
Fate shall not lightly toss him, like a ball,
Betwixt his hopes and fears.

Take not with sullen face and frozen heart
Thy daily Lenten dole :
Nor nurse, in gloomy discontent apart,
Thine unregenerate soul.

But that which cometh to thine open door
Receive with kindly eyes.
Life's deepest wrong, perchance, at last shall
soar,
An angel in disguise.

THE KISS.

WE kiss'd beneath the leaves, and lo !
The hidden brook laugh'd sweet and low.
Upon the woods there fell a hush ;
The blackbird chuckl'd in the bush ;
The startl'd finch forgot to sing,
Amaz'd before so strange a thing ;
The gay thrush flew to tell his mate
That sat, incredulous, by the gate ;
The oak-tree standing by the stile
Relaxed into a hoary smile ;
The lily hung its modest head,
The rose by turns was white and red.
And, of a sudden, you and I
Grew strangely still, we knew not why.

And, hand in hand, as on we went,
Drinking deep draughts of life's content,

We heard the nightingale complain,
And make sweet music of his pain.
And as each bright, bewild'ring note
Burst in glad riot from his throat,
And we stood listening, you and I,
To hear that brave heart break and die,
We smil'd, in joyous unbelief,
Unmoved by such delicious grief.
And, as we slowly turned away,
Life's open book before us lay,
Wherein, with wond'ring eyes, we read
Scrolls of the living and the dead.
And, with exulting hearts, we said,
'If Love be such immortal pain,
We still will drink our fill again.'

LIFE AND DEATH.

Out from the heart of the rain-cloud
Shineth the bow.
The snowdrop upsoars in its white shroud
Out of the snow.
Out of the depths of the ocean
Upriseth the rain.
Out of the heart the emotion
That never was vain.

Forth from the cave of thy sorrow
There cometh surcease.
And out of the storm of to-morrow
The Angel of Peace.
Out through a wisdom far-seeing
Our destinies run.
And the mists that encircle our being
Are born of the sun.

After the rush of the river

Cometh the sea.

After Life's fevered endeavour

Rest cometh to thee.

After the darkness is deepest

Then cometh the light.

After Life's labour thou sleepest

Through the long night.

HOMELESS.

By day across the silent hills I roam,
The wide world is my home ;
By night the green earth is my fragrant bed,
Wherein betimes my weary head
I lay upon a clod.
I know the shady forests deep and broad.
I cannot feel alone,
For every flower and tree to me is known.
The star-encrusted firmament
Is my immeasurable tent,
Wherein, unchild, I bivouac with God.

ON A HILL-TOP.

THINK of it, Soul, and be afraid !

This earthly flooring of the sky,
These warrior-mountains undismay'd,

These hills that hunger for a cry,
These rivers groping for the sea

That nightly yearns for moon and star,
These tossing woods that roar their glee

To greet the cloud wains from afar—
Are but the circle of our aims,

The bourne of hope or vain regret,
The boundaries of our steps, the frames
Wherein our little lives are set.

THE SHOOTING STAR.

BEHIND yon clouds that curtain in
The far stars waning slow,
Above this dim abode of sin
I see a bended bow.

High o'er the sleeping world it stands,
Close by immortal Mars,
And darkly held by warrior hands
As bent for mighty wars.

All ready for the gathering fight
Stand ranged the hosts afar,
And see, across the dusky night
God shoots a fiery star.

ASLEEP.

My love hath gone away
Far o'er the cruel sea,
Into a strange country,
Where, all the night and day,
She lieth dreamily.

A king made her his own,
And laid her on his bed.
And there, when eves are red,
She sleepeth all alone,
With flow'rs about her head,
And on her heart a stone.

In summer, all the day,
She hath a gown of green,
Gold-broidered like a queen,
And bright with flow'rs of May.

But in the winter night
She lieth all in white.

She hath forgotten all :
 She knows and heeds us not.
The hours like rose-leaves fall
 Within that lonesome spot,
And song-birds softly call.

But still she will not hear.
 The murmur of our praise
Falls on her heedless ear,
 As, thro' the unending days,
 She listens to the strains
Of heavenly music near,
 Whose lull her sense enchains.

How should she ope her eyes
 To look upon our face,
Who, lapped in visions, lies
Enraptur'd, all alone,
 Within her chosen place,
Gazing upon God's throne ?

Her senses are afraid—

She suffereth eclipse :

As if a spirit laid

His finger on her lips.

The silent sleep of Death

She sleepeth, undismayed,

While angels hold their breath.

BY THE SEA.

As I lingered by the sea,
Lightly dreaming of the wonder
And the glory yet to be,
There awoke and came to me,
From its dim immensity,
Wafted from its gloomy grandeur,
Echoes of Eternity,
Mutterings of Futurity,
Speech and silence equally.

And there rose, from realms Elysian,
In Time's wayward undertone,
From the depths of the unknown,
Spoken by some far magician,
Fragments of dim language, blown
O'er the ocean vast and lone.

And I heard, in silence leaning,
From the world lying under,
Like the sound of spirit-thunder
Piercing through the folds of clay,
Messages of mystic meaning,
Caught by nimble spirits gleaning
In the fields of far away.

Messages of solemn greeting
From the ocean's troubled flow,
Spoke by sea-bound voices meeting
And, with bated voice, repeating
Secrets of the long ago :
Voices from thought's far dominions,
Yearnings of a mute unrest ;
Rumours of the East and West
Shaken from the sea-bird's pinions.

Tidings of the dark hereafter
From the shadow of eclipse ;
Peals of wild demoniac laughter
Blown from sea-encompass'd lips :
Signals wav'd from sinking ships ;
Drifts of hopeless elegies
From forgotten argosies.

And I walked, with feet immortal,
By some strange enchantment led,
Underneath the swaying portal
Of the mansions of the dead,
Thro' the dreary dormitories,
And the magical recesses
Of the mighty ocean-bed.

And I saw, with swift emotion,
Lying on the gleaming floor,
Treasures of the miser ocean
Gather'd on the hopeless shore,
Hurled in the rude commotion
Of the angry billows' roar.

Saw the dim enchanted valleys,
And the forests of the sea,
Where, in softly-moving alleys,
Drinking of the sunless chalice,
Silence sat perpetually.

And I knew, with inward vision,
Secrets of the ages gone ;
Sunsets over fields Elysian,
And the wonders of the dawn,
Lighting up, in drear fruition,
Spaces of an emerald lawn.

And, with fearful introspection,
Trooping in a silent row,
As if fearful of detection,
Like a newer resurrection,
Walk'd the ghosts of long ago.
And they bore in hands ecstatic,
With a dreary, mirthless glee,
Branches, rudely emblematic,
From the garden of the sea :
And they sang, in wayward fashion,
To the dimly-passing ships,
Songs of lurid sea-born passion
Never sung by human lips.

And so wild and sweet their singing,
Thrills of sudden memories bringing
To my heart, like sea-bells ringing,
That I stood, entranced, to hear.
All the mystery of the ocean,
All its centuried emotion,
As by some enchanted potion
Seem'd ingather'd in mine ear.

Then, like an incorporate leaven,
From some spot as far as Heaven,

Rose a sudden, moaning wind,
Rushing fast and ever faster,
Like the herald of disaster,
Fleeing from the wrath behind.

And it shook the ocean-sleeper,
Lying heavy in his bed ;
And it pass'd, a headlong reaper,
Where his foaming sheaves lay shed
And it gather'd, as it went,
Harvest of the weary meadows,
Fleeing onward like dim shadows
Sea-blown, with sad anguish bent,
Pale ships, 'neath their tents of snow.
And, with loud exultant clamour,
Broke them with his fierce sea-hammer,
Toss'd them to his barns below.

Then they drew the mariners
Gently from the drownèd ships,
Stricken by the heavy curse
Spoken by the Sea-god's lips.
And they laid upon their heads
Wreaths of sea-flow'rs, lightly shaken,
And they hung about their beds,
Softly bidding them awaken.

And I would have longer listened
To that weird, unearthly cry,
Dimly, fatefully imprisoned,
Like a weary dreamer's sigh :
But it faded on my ear,
And I stood once more alone,
List'ning to the wailing drear
Of the ocean's monotone
That for ever sends to me,
From its dim immensity
Echoes of Eternity,
Mutterings of Futurity,
Speech and silence equally.

THE END OF THINGS.

I stood with God and watched Creation die.
I saw great stars go out without a sigh,
And mighty planets falter on their track,
And starry clusters sicken into black.
'Begone,' I said, 'Man needeth you no more :
Ye did but light him to his chamber door
While yet in shadow he would lie
Until the night was o'er.

And, by the red light of the dying sun,
I read Time's awful records, one by one,
Whose leaves, grown heavy with the weight of years,
Shook with the wind of human hopes and fears.
And wailing voices said, 'We are undone ;
Clos'd are God's eyes and ears.'

And kneeling nations huddled on the floor,
Watching with hollow eyes the closed door ;
Who wept and cried, ' We cannot pass within.
Our feet are prison'd in the toils of sin.
Baffled we lie, enchained for evermore ;
We cannot hope to win.'

And as I saw the waste of human woe
That lay, a sea of anguish, far below,
Swift from my lips the pleading question fell—
' Can all these tears not drown the fires of Hell ?
Is God, for ever, man's untiring foe,
And Death Life's passing bell ?'

And lo ! a hand forth from the Judgment-Book
Tore out the leaves that, like a snowy brook,
Fled down the silken channels of the air
Whose waters, like a downward-flowing prayer,
From off the faces of the mourners took
Its weight of mute despair.

And setting feet of light upon my pain
The Cherubim cried, ' Christ hath not lived in vain.'
And from the silence of the furthest deep
I heard a voice, like one that spoke in sleep—
' The meaning of the riddle now is plain ;
Now let the Reaper reap.'

A SONG OF GOD'S WRATH.

LOUD laughed the Lord across the ringèd waters.

Reel'd back the land, affrighted stood the day.

Fierce rang the storm ; the sea-king's shudd'ring
daughters

Shrieking wrung their glassy hands and hid themselves
away.

High overhead the Angel of Destruction

Rode on the tempest, drove the waves before,

Spurr'd on the winds, chiding their inaction,

Scatter'd all the timorous ships, and cast them on the
shore.

Down in their berths the mariners were praying ;

Deep in their hidden beds the dead lay undismay'd ;

All round their heads the seas with fear were swaying,

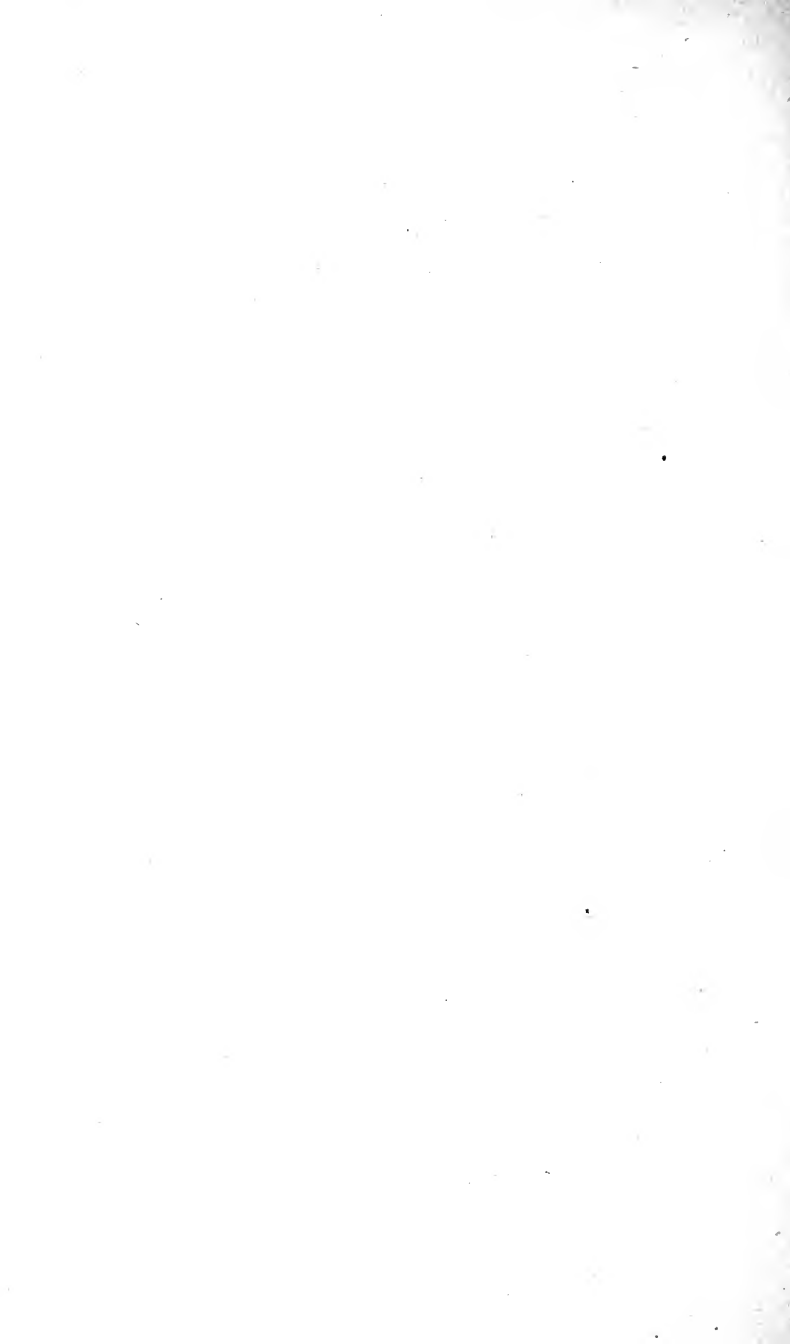
And the mighty ocean-deeps grew sore afraid.

High in God's hand gleam'd the lightning's sabre
Cleaving with swift, silent stroke the leaden heart of
night ;
All thro' the hours the darkness was in labour,
And when the dawn was come it brought forth the
light.

Then God arose and gather'd up His anger ;
Smooth'd the ocean-floor and put the broken ships
away ;
Rein'd in the winds that, bellowing in thunder,
Trumpeted their fury in the op'ning ear of day.

Loud sang the deep its hymn of praise rejoicing ;
Loud piped the land its leafy monody ;
Clear rang the wind, the joy of Nature voicing ;
But loudest sang the dead men in the depths of the
sea.

POEMS AND FRAGMENTS.



IN A VILLAGE CHURCHYARD.

I.

Av ! here they lie, laid in their dreamless sleep,
Each with his stone that, like a garrulous friend,
Doth spread abroad the record of his life.
They have lived their little day, and now they are
As hostages to Death, and signs whereon
We stake redemption ; witnesses of Time,
Whose lights are out, and here are cast aside
As burnt-out candles, lamps that have no oil ;
Unmindful tenants that have gone away,
Leaving us here their garments for a sign.

II.

How are they slipp'd out of our memory !
And like the tearful dew have ta'en the air,
That did so stand in our uncounsell'd grief,

That all the rounded future of our way
Seem'd narrow'd to their loss ; their memory's flower,
Nipt by the cold air of forgetfulness,
Hath dwindl'd in the shadow of Love's sun ;
Their place is taken like an empty chair
That hath no choice of office ; and their names,
That made such constant music in our ears,
Now fall with strange disturbance on our sense,
Like far-off sounds heard in a waking dream.

III.

Here's one that hath no record of his name !
Time with rude touch hath blotted out the scroll
That did inform us of him, and no hand
Out of its charity hath swept away
The envious weeds that grow about his tomb.
Yet doth he sleep as peacefully as they
About whose heads the clust'ring violets crowd ;
The grass doth grow as green above his bed
As by the vantage of their sepulchres ;
And in the appointed season, I doubt not,
God will remember him, and by his name
Will call him from his slumbers with the rest.

IV.

This one hath look'd on Death and never flinch'd ;
Hath gone as gladly to those greedy arms
As to his mother's bosom, fearing none ;
Hath ta'en farewell of life without a sigh.
Who's he that hath so strange a scorn of that
Which doth appal the valiantest ? A child !
One that, as seemeth from his epitaph,
Had tarried scarce three summers on the earth.
Strange doth it seem to meet thy childish form
Accour'd with the panoply of Death,
And burden'd with the honours of the grave.
Who hath oppress'd thy sleep with this great stone,
And weigh'd thee down with pond'rous epitaph ?
Thou that should'st rest beneath the tender grass
With snowdrops for a meet remembrancer.
O ! little actor on Life's mimic scene,
How is it with thee now on Death's great stage ?
How will the weakness of those little feet
Walk straight before the majesty of God ?
How will those eyes sustain that awful blaze
That here could scarce endure a feeble gleam ?
Those never-resting hands, that little tongue
That babbl'd of its playthings ere it slept—
Peace—let it be !

V.

This was a traveller
Of whom they knew not where he went nor whence.
Thus far he roam'd upon his lonely road,
And here hath fallen, never more to rise.
Hither with faltering steps the wanderer came
Wearied and sore, and further would he go,
But Death hath met him suddenly in the way,
And like a tender friend hath led him in
And eas'd him of his load ; now here he lies
Careless of Fate, unknowing and unknown
Of all who pass him by, and only I—
Who knew him not, yet, mov'd by sympathy,
Have mus'd awhile beside his nameless grave—
Do make this brief remembrance of his lot.

VI.

How doth Life's river turn to stagnant pools,
And lose the fresher current of its force
In these dull shallows ! Thus Thought's eager flight
Is burden'd by the weight of circumstance,
And all the natural pulses of our blood
Are bounded by a drowsy discontent :
Thus each day's life lives in the doom of time,

And Death is but the passing of a thought.
Things do partake of such unnatural state,
That our dull'd souls do stagger in a dream
And lose discussion of the present time,
From out our nerveless grasp. What is't to live ?
It is to know and do, and in the deed
To make the thought partaker of the end,
For thought is life ; to treasure up our days,
Counting the hours like pearls on a string,
Seeking to make of each a fragrant urn
Wherein to lay embalm'd some gracious deed
Or hint of noble enterprise ; it is
To walk in silence, conscious of great ends ;
To love truth, to be patient, bearing much,
And calm and full of faith—not to be great,
But to live greatly, making of our lives
Such record as may live in after days ;
And seeing in our cold and natural life,
Tho' blurr'd with tears and stained with earthly dust,
The mortal counterpart of that far state
Whose promise is the solace of our pain.

Show forth, O Life, the wonders of thy ways !
Unfold the secrets of thy hidden plan !
Take up the windings of this tangl'd web

And, out of discord, make fair harmony !
Oh ! that the days were gather'd to their end :
Would that this fleeting life were life indeed ;
Would we could break this pale and fever'd dream
That holds our being like a mighty spell ;
Could rend the cloud of this encircling veil,
And see the purpose of the long-drawn years ;
Look with calm eyes upon the mid-day sun,
Hear all the myriad hymning of the spheres,
The low, deep beating of Creation's heart,
And all the harmony of Nature's song.

THE WANDERER'S FUNERAL HYMN.

HERE shall she sleep ; this sunset-stricken spot
Shall be the ending of her mortal way.
Thus far in joy and sorrow hath she come,
Sharing the dangers of our pilgrimage,
Joyfully toiling on with wearied feet ;—
Now she hath stumbl'd suddenly in the way,
And fallen here for ever.

Lay her down,
And bury her in silence—all that is.
Sorrow nor Care nor any mortal ill
Shall harm her more, and neither days of toil
Nor nights of weariness shall weigh her down.
Her years were like the seasons of a flower,
Short-liv'd but beautiful, and in their sum
Of such a rare perfection that she seem'd

As one that was not of us, but a spirit
That tarried here a little in its flight.
Oh ! she did strew fair flowers about our feet
And pour'd rich balm upon our wounded minds,
And, as we toiled along Life's weary way,
Her presence like sweet music cheer'd us on,
Circling us round with beauty : where she came,
Sorrow forgot her wound, and sullen Care
Let slip the heavy burden of his load ;—
Now she is taken from us, and all is
As tho' she had not been.

Yet think of this,
That she hath been partaker of our lot,
And partner of our sorrows and our joys.
She too hath lived this life of suffering,
This restless struggling after happiness ;
Hath borne this troublous time of bitter-sweet
And all the sores that prey upon our flesh,
The shocks of Time, the soul's satiety,
The weariness of spirit, and the ills
That sap mortality ; still bearing here,
The mortal term of her imprisonment,
And with such loving meekness that it was
No burden, but a duty full of hope,

So meekly did she bear her load of care,
Bringing with her the fair companionship
Of Patience, Silence, and Humility,
That lovingly did take her by the hand,
Leading her on with anxious tenderness,
Guiding her steps with dear solicitude.
Oh ! she was holy, kind, and pitiful ;
Saintly in thought, and fill'd with innocence,
The crown and perfect flower of maidenhood ;
And of a tender pity so divine,
That, like the encircling air, it did enclose
With loving sympathy each living thing.
Her presence was a blessing, and her voice
Was as the rare enchantment of a spell,
Stirring the heavy pulses of the air
With gleams of rippling laughter.

Lay her down

And to your heavy duties ; yet before
You cover up her features look again
On all that was so precious ; read once more
The saintly record of her pallid face,
And bear it in your memories evermore :
Look on that brow whereon enthronéd sat
The tender majesty of Innocence ;

Those sweet star-eyes in whose unfathom'd depths
Did dwell such loving Peace ; those parted lips
'That breath'd but now the music of our names.
Look on those hands that labour'd for us all,
And now are folded by ; those wearied feet
That toiled so willingly along Life's road
And now shall toil no more : alas ! alas !
'That such concentrance of immortal grace
Should be committed to the darksome vault,
And lie in sad retirement from our eyes.

Oh ! let us take new impulse from her life
And courage from the lesson of its close :
So shall our days be witnesses of her,
And she shall live again in our decay.
Now earth to earth and dust to kindred dust ;
Let her cold clay be given to the ground,
And mingle with the soil from whence it came.
Thus do we lay her in her narrow bed.—
Now leave her to the company of the saints

THE OLD TOWN AND THE NEW

I.

I DREW my breath

Where two twin-towns stand by the Western sea,
And make diversion in the flowing land :—
One young and eager, looking far ahead,
And seeing in the promise of to-day
An earnest of the greater yet to come ;
A busy haunt of men, a teeming mart,
Whence white-sail'd ships do seek the furthest seas.

The other silent, melancholy, old ;
A widow'd mother, looking ever back,
And, as an emblem, holding in her hand
A ruin'd pile ; still seeking on the sands
The vanish'd footprints of a bygone day ;

Gazing in sadness out upon the deep,
Like Patience sitting on the silent shore.

Still thro' the windings of her narrow streets
As in the days of old the people go ;
Still in her homes is heard the busy hum
Of cheerful shuttles ; still her hardy sons
Lead forth brave argosies across the earth :
But from the presence of the ancient town
Hath passed away the glory and the spell.
No more she hears upon the busy quay
The sounds that once were sweet within her ears—
The Babel of strange tongues, the sudden cry,
The sailors' measured chant upon the poop,
The noise of coming or of parting ships.
All these have vanished. Daily by her feet,
White-robed and beautiful, the tall ships go
Upon the gleaming highway of the deep :
But never to the shelter of her arms
Comes any wanderer home ; silent and sad,
She sits an outcast by the Western gate
Where once she stood in honoured rivalry,
Brooding upon the memories of past days—
A mother bending o'er her first-born's grave.
About the place there hangs a Sabbath hush,

A stillness like a chamber of the dead ;
No sound is heard upon the silent quay
Save tread of curious stranger idly led
To gaze upon this shuttlecock of Time.
There the lone sea-bird dries its dripping wing
Sitting unharmed and calm upon the reef ;
The fisher spreads his net upon the beach ;
The fishwives wrangle o'er the shining freight ;
The boatman sighs within his tiny bark ;
The drowsy waves rock crooning on the shore.
All else is still, save children at their play.
Silence and Desolation sit around,
And ' Ichabod ' is written on her walls.

II.

By day the air is burden'd with the smoke
Of never-resting chimneys ; but, by night
The land is fring'd with fire, and far around
The sky is redden'd by the three-fold glow
Of distant conflagration, where the East,
Girt with the semblance of a flaming zone,
Glows with the promise of another dawn.
Far in, athwart the land, they burn low down,
Like smould'ring fires almost burnt out ; but near,
Dark hands hold flaming torches in the air,

Whose bright tongues tremble like the restless heads
Of fiery snakes that leap to lick the clouds
That far above them hang, and throb, and burn,
With deep pulsations of a crimson glow.

III.

A treeless land—or if some few there be
That still survive the bitter winter blast,
A shrinking band, they stand disconsolate,
Wan and dishevelled, old before their time ;
A broken remnant whose storm-blacken'd limbs
Lean cowering 'neath the Ocean's briny scourge ;
Pathetic forms bowed down by grief and woe
They stand in mute resentment of their lot,
Bending their heads reproachfully to earth ;
A suffering people overlaid with care
Whose souls lie crushed beneath the tyrant's heel,
Silent they dream like brooding souls that wait
In drear expectancy within the tomb
The Resurrection and the Life to come.

IV.

Land-lock'd, isle-guarded, harbour'd 'gainst fierce storms,
Yet swept by every homeward-hurrying gale
That flies for shelter shrieking to the land.

Rain-drench'd and sad, the haunt of cold sea-fogs
That rake the gray sea 'neath a ghastly moon.
The granary of the ocean, hither come,
Drawn by the fierce steeds of the western gales,
The cloud-wains from the barren fields of foam
Heavy with harvest of the salt sea-plains
Upreap'd in silence in the sunless hours,
In fields wherein can no man reap or sow.

V.

Westwards and towards the summer-setting sun
Drawn like a rampart 'gainst the flashing sky,
An island lies upon whose topmost peaks
Day's watchman hastes to light the fires of Dawn.
A pale sea-vision lovely as a dream,
Born of the lonely amaranthine seas,
Like Aphrodite risen from the deep.
There while the drowsy hours go hand in hand,
An eloquent silence lies upon the hills.
There golden glammers of the summer noon
Break thro' the purple passion of the dawn.
A poem writ by the Almighty's hand,
Changing in beauty with the changing year.
In winter days apparell'd like a bride,
A great white wonder gleaming marble-fair,

When winds are frozen to a silent sleep,
And all the world lies in a whiten'd dream :
But when the Summer stands upon the hills
And round her flock the children of the sun,
Then all the dryads of the leafy woods
Hang out their incense-banners on the wind.
And on the laughing slopes a-tiptoe stands
A gleaming host in purple and in gold,
In bright procession gloriously gay
Ringing its silent bells upon the breeze,
Sweet thurifers in God's cathedral church
That swing their silent censers on the air.

Oh, silent stretches of sun-lighted hills !
What wonders have I seen upon your face—
Blue shadow-avalanches on the slopes :
Red sunset-fires in corrie and in glen :
The shifting glories of the moorland waste :
White-milky mists that melt across the strath :
The wailing sheep that drift upon the heights
And curdle in the hollows of the grass :
The piercing curlews crying on the moor,
The hermit heron pond'ring in the pool,
Wrapping his wings about him like a cloak :
The heavy bee droning his drowsy joy,

Drunk with the gather'd gladness of the flow'rs :
The lone star lingering by the dark'ning ridge
To light the shepherd home. The silent stag
List'ning the watch-dog's clamour far away :—
Oh, nameless wonders of a sunburnt isle,
Ye sadden me with thoughts of all ye are—
So near ye seem, and yet ye are so far.

THE PERFECT WOMAN.

SHE shall be

As is a flower, so born in purity,
And in her virtues boundless as the air ;
Girt up with fear, fenc'd round with chastity,
Rounded in wisdom, perfect as a star.
Reverence shall wait upon her steps, and Love
Shall clothe her like a garment, on her brow
Shall Truth sit smiling like the watchful star
That hangs upon the forehead of the Eve.

A great simplicity shall mark her ways
And bind the linkèd actions of her time ;
Tears shall lie near the surface of her life ;
Infinite Pity, like a living spring
Shall bubble in the silence of her heart ;
Her soul shall hunger with an awful wish,
And all the pulses of her being yearn
To mitigate the sorrows of her kind.

Calm-eyed and patient, never speaking ill,
And slow to speak wherein she cannot praise ;
Faith, never dim, shall guide her feet, and Hope
Shall brood upon her being like a dove ;
And over all, like benediction's calm,
Shall all her paths be lit by Charity ;
Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three, yet so
As Charity is greatest, so shall she
Be known by Charity.

A SHELL.

THIS fragile shell, whose convoluted form
Is fashion'd with such strangely-curious art,
Hath known the secrets of the treasure-house
Whose hollow was the cradle of its birth.
Its ear hath caught the tuneless harmonies
That wait upon the moving of the seas ;
And even now, in sullen ecstasy,
Like to a prison'd spirit in its dreams,
It doth repeat its mystic homily,
In language of an undiscover'd speech,
As mutter'd music, inarticulate song.
'Tis but a sea-grown flower, an ocean-weed,
A tiny revelation of the deep,
An ear pluck'd from the harvest of the sea,
A little thing we tread beneath our feet
Upon the storm-strewn shore, yet, in its way,
An echo of the Universal Heart

Whose breathings are the pulses of our lives ;
A feeble voice sighing in harmony
With the deep concert of the winds and waves ;
Breathing low witness to the same great mystery
Whereof we are a part, and bearing still
The stamp of an Intelligence as divine
As that whereof we are the deeper mark.

NAPOLEON FALLEN.

THOU had'st it all—Emperor, and Prince, and King !
All things that minister to our ill were thine,
As conquests, triumphs, and the sounding wars
That bark, loud-mouth'd, about the feet of kings.
How art thou shrunk that did'st so greatly soar !
Once the vast universe did scarce suffice
To bound the rapture of thy swelling thought ;
Now art thou fain of cold-eyed Charity
To beg a little rood of alien ground :
Now, for a sceptre, doth thy feeble hand
Grasp at the lowly emblem of the cross :
For kingly robe thou hast the spotless shroud
Wherein, at last, the slave doth take his rest :
For martial sound thou hast the sighing wind ;
For crown a fillet, for a throne the grave.
All things do mock thee in thy misery,
And with inverted meaning bear thee down,
Turning to laughter all thy pitiful state :
For none hath soar'd so high—nor fall'n so low.

DEAD SORROWS.

THE dead are with us everywhere
By land, and shore, and sea ;
And all the voices of the air
Are full of Death's decree.

And in our lives lie countless graves
Of dead griefs, cold and pale,
O'er whose sad sleep the lone heart raves
With low and dreary wail.

There, in our inmost hearts, they lie
Beneath the snows of years,
In silence gather'd sadly by,
And water'd with our tears.

As they that, in the churchyard old,
Lie cover'd o'er with white,
Within the winter's bitter cold,
In an eternal night :

Each folded in his narrow bed,
For ever laid below,
In dreamless sleep—and overhead
The footprints in the snow.

A FAREWELL.

FAREWELL !—for the hour is arisen,
The hour that we fear'd ;
And the gleam that illumin'd our prison
Has all disappeared :
It has vanish'd from roof-tree and ceiling,
It has died on the wall,
And the gloom of a desolate feeling
Is over us all.

Like the star that the Dawn brings in gladness
Thou did'st rise on our day ;
Like the star that the Eve wears in sadness
Thou dost vanish away ;
We are shipwreck'd in darkness and sorrow
On a desolate shore,
And the dread of the darker to morrow
Is worse than before.

Farewell ! thou hast sweeten'd our labour,
Thou hast lighten'd our load,
And the joy thou did'st bring as a neighbour
Hath shorten'd the road ;
Thou hast led to our sorrowful dwelling
Sweet sunshine and light,
To our day songs of happiness telling,
And stars to our night.

Still in thought we will follow thy going
Through long weary years,
As we now mark thy form fainter growing
Through eyes dim with tears ;
Like the gleam of a dying emotion
Far over the land ;—
Now the day-star hath sunk in the ocean,
And the Night is at hand.

BY THE SEA.

TELL me, O Sea, the secret
Thou hidest in thy breast,
With whose o'ermastering passion
Thy slumbers are opprest.

Thou hast the sound of sorrow,
And the music of despair,
And unto thee is given
Communion with the air.

Thine are the priceless treasures
That crowd the gleaming floor,
And thine the key of wonder
That keeps the sacred door.

Thou only know'st the sorrow
Of bleeding hearts that roam,
Seeking, amid thy vastness,
To bring their dead ones home.

Only a little season
And they shall be set free ;
O mourning hearts be comforted—
' There shall be no more sea.'

DEPART, O SUN !

DEPART, O Sun ! that with a rushing flood
Of glory dost ensanguine all the hills.
I see the happy waters glow like blood,
And wonder at the awful gleam that fills
The earth with splendour, yet, yet still I say,
Sink down ! far o'er the waters of the bay,
Behind the gorgeous curtains of the West,
For I am weary of the lagging day,
Am sad, and fain would lay me down to rest.
Shine out, ye stars ! 'tho' that the light ye lent
No more on earth shall seem as once to me—
A star is fallen from the firmament,
A glory faded from the land and sea.

A DYING DAY.

BLOOD-RED as a fiery meteor sank the sun of evening
down,
Slowly settling to its ending, o'er the little German town.

Slowly as with ling'ring footsteps towards the distant
ridge it pass'd,
Ere it fell, a backward look athwart the little town it
cast.

Lo ! the village glow'd before it flushing red beneath its
rays ;
Blushing, joyous as a maiden when she meets her lover's
gaze.

Like enchantment was the flood that hover'd like a waking
dream ;

Every feature chang'd and glowing in the glory of its
gleam.

Every roof a crimson banner floated on the air afar ;
Every vane was lambent lightning playing round about a
star.

Every tree was dipp'd in purple, every window flam'd
with gold ;

Every stream was molten fire, seething in a burning
mould.

Slowly from the silent landscape ebb'd the flashing sea
of light,

Like a gorgeous veil of splendour slowly furl'd from the
sight.

Slowly, as tho' all unwilling, closed the fiery eye of
day ;

And the scene, like Cinderella, reassumed its sober
gray.

Silent, happy, lay the town as rapt in adoration still ;
Slowly sinking to its slumbers 'neath the shadow of the
hill.

Till the light began to pale and glimmer in the crystal
West ;
And the village, like a toiler 'leased from labour, sank to
rest.

THE END.

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